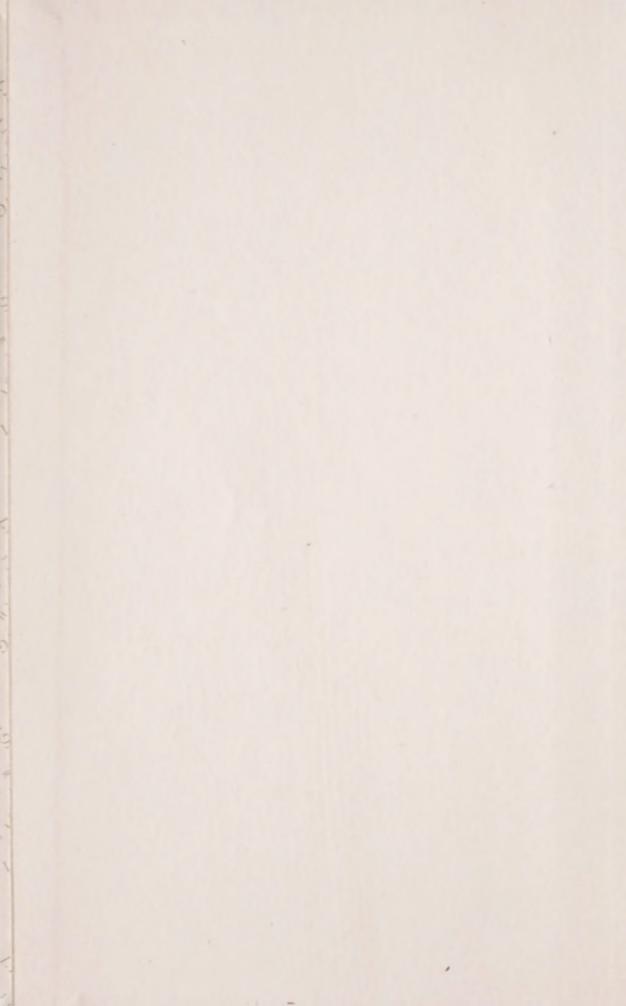
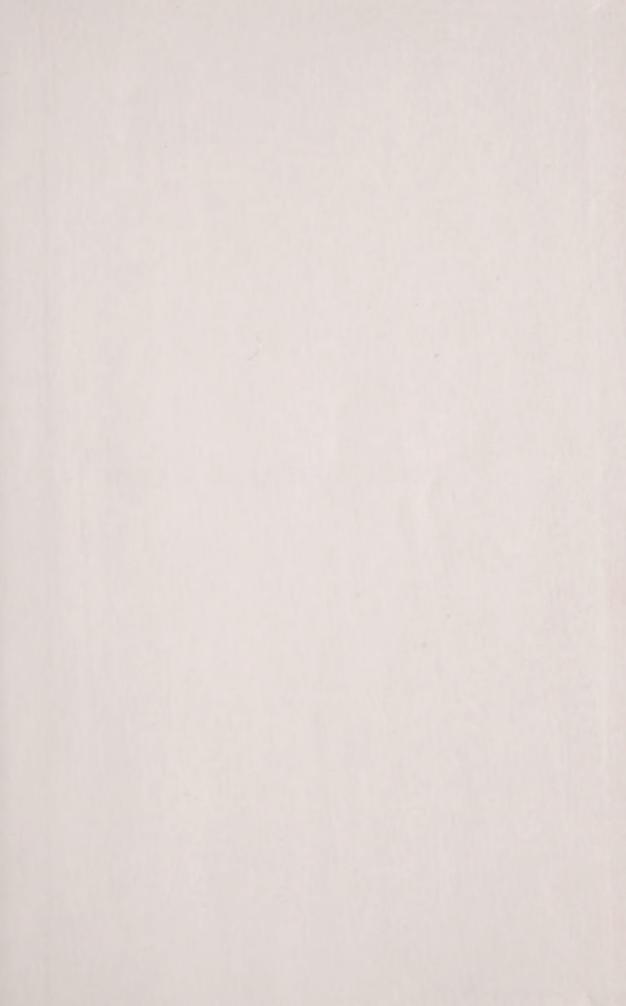
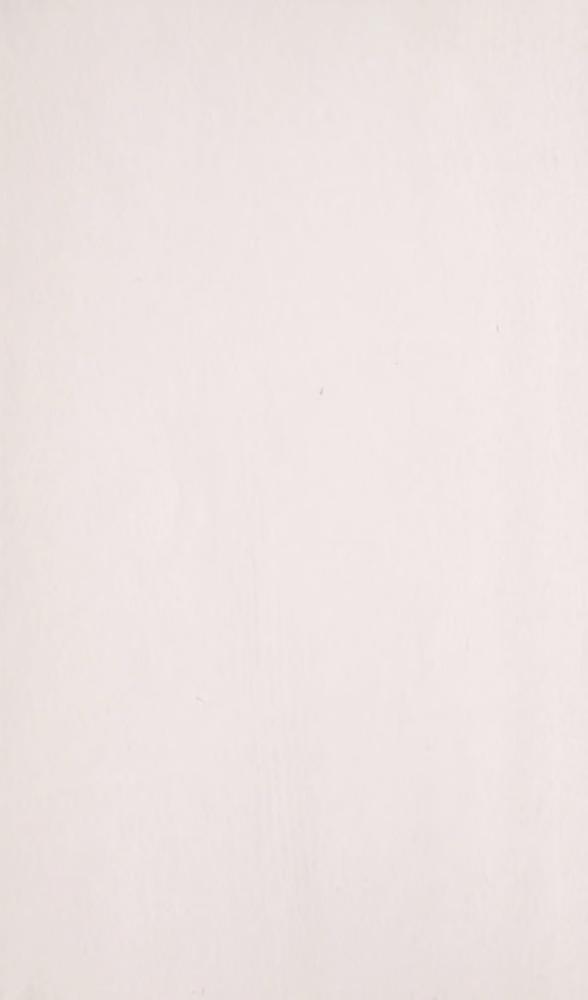
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HELEN GRANT'S FRIENDS

HELEN GRANT'S PRIENDS





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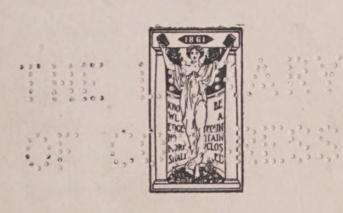
HELEN GRANT'S FRIENDS

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

AUTHOR OF "HELEN GRANT'S SCHOOLDAYS," "IN THE KING'S COUNTRY," "IN TRUST," "LARRY," "THE KATHIE STORIES," "ALMOST AS GOOD AS A BOY," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY AMY BROOKS



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HELEN GRANT'S FRIENDS



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HELEN GRANT'S FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

SOMETHING NEW IN HER LIFE

Helen Grant sat on the porch at Mrs. Dayton's one July evening. There had been a gentle rain all day, just enough to make a patter of soft harmony among the leaves, but now it was clearing up in a grayish-purple twilight, with a faint rose hue in the west. Mrs. Dayton had gone out to a sick neighbor's, the boarders were in the lower end of the parlor playing whist, her father had gone to New York, and Mr. Warfield had started on his vacation.

She was really glad to be alone. She had hardly seemed herself in the whirl of the past two months. A confused tangle of impressions had assailed her, as if her aims and plans had been all dislocated, and every effort to right them gave her pain.

Was it only two years ago that she had come

over here and found Mrs. Van Dorn in her high-backed willow chair, a picture of serene elderly life? A little, unformed girl who was a cheerful waiting maid, an entertaining companion through the summer, a protégée half adopted, looking forward to a life that held delightful possibilities. Yes, it was too good, too entrancing to come to pass in this everyday world. But there were the two delightful school years that would always remain, a love that would be one of her sacred memories.

To-night she loved Mrs. Van Dorn with a fervor that was in itself a comfort that would always be one of the exquisite joys of her life. She was glad she loved her so well, for nothing could ever come to mar it now. She idealized as a grateful girl of strong feelings could, and the romance of youth naturally would. What others said might pain her, but it would not change her regard.

She had not realized her death at first, though she was stunned by the shock, but it was not any selfish sense of disappointment. She wanted to think of her in the sunny haunts of Spain, where she had been so restful and happy, and then at Paris, planning, shopping, making ready for the advent of the girl she

was caring about, Helen thought with almost a mother's love. She still felt as if she might go to her some time.

That in the midst of this her father, who really had been considered dead, should return after six years' absence, and that he should stand here on this very porch and take her hands in a quiet way, with no especial joy, hardly surprise, seemed strange indeed to her. He had glanced her over curiously, critically, and was glad she did not resemble her mother. Somehow at that instant her heart turned to her mother.

Mrs. Dayton's welcome had been both warm and sympathetic, Mr. Warfield's strong clasp full of a glad friendliness. But her father seemed more than a stranger to her.

They all talked of Mrs. Van Dorn at the supper table. Mr. Conway, with the familiarity of old acquaintanceship, inquired some of the particulars.

"I saw by the paper that she had left next to nothing. How was it?"

Helen's color deepened with a feeling of embarrassment.

"Her income was an annuity. She had no near relatives, and she has been very generous. Miss Gage speaks of her in the highest terms."

"She seemed to me a rather queer, pretentious body," began Mr. Warfield.

"She had some odd ways, but I shouldn't call her pretentious," and Mrs. Dayton gave her generous smile. "She had traveled about a good deal and seen many notable people, was wonderfully well informed, and I will say she took up with our plain country ways with no captiousness. It was generous of her to give Helen her two years' schooling and care."

"Which you would have done without being in any such affluent circumstances. Helen would not have lacked for friends here at home. And the generosity depended upon what she meant to make of Helen afterward."

"I should have been very glad if she had taken me for a companion," and Helen's eyes deepened with emotion. "I shall always cherish her memory and thank her from my inmost soul for those two happy years."

Her father glanced sharply at her as if he had some comment ready, but did not utter it.

"I have heard of life annuities," began Mr. Conway, "and it appears to me a most excellent way of winding up one's affairs. Then

you needn't be afraid of the ups and downs of the stock market, nor the failure of bonds to pay interest. And you truly do not have to save up for old age. No wonder she could take matters so easily. I really liked her if she did cavort on the side of youth."

They went on discussing her affairs and her ways, though Mrs. Dayton interposed to keep the talk from unfriendliness. Everybody in the small town had been interested, as was but natural, and wondered if there had been a little left to Helen Grant.

Mr. Warfield walked out after supper. Four of the ladies played at a game of whist, while the two husbands sauntered down the garden to their favorite smoking resort. Addison Grant seemed to study his daughter, then by a sort of consent they walked along to the end of the porch.

"Rather curious," he began, "that this woman should have taken such a fancy to you. I suppose she meant a sort of adoption?"

"She was a delightful friend. I think she meant to give me all the pleasures and opportunities that she could," Helen said with quiet decision.

"And marry you off to some rich man, so

you could go on with the pleasures." There was a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

Helen made no reply.

"That is generally a woman's aim. Well, perhaps it is what they are best fitted for. I suppose now, your education is mostly accomplishments. Nothing solid or of any special use to the world?"

"It is sufficient to enable me to teach for the rest of it. I have an offer to return to Aldred House and finish the remaining two years in this manner."

She uttered it in a proud tone, yet she felt really sorry for the distance between them.

After a pause: "What branches were they?"

Helen enumerated them in a steady voice.

"The Latin may be of service. A girl's French is seldom worth much, and music is of little account. Let me see—you are sixteen?"

"Yes," in a low tone.

"I left you in good hands. I did not suppose you would be likely to outgrow your mother's people. They were not students, but fitted for their environment. I had never been, but I suddenly stumbled on the thing that

satisfied me heart and soul. And then came an opportunity to go to the far East and study the history of the early peoples, the beginnings of the race-no, we have not got to that yet, but the marvels of a civilization and art that makes ours look puerile with all its so-called advantages. What stories there are written in stone! What men they were! What giant work they did! What armies they led! What palaces they built! And yet we have not wrested the secret of the lives before them, of the earlier races who must have trained them in those marvels of architecture, of carving those colossal figures, and then the finest and most delicate ornamentation on their walls. Is there anything like it now?"

His voice had a curious charm, and his enthusiasm moved her.

"I came back to London to help translate these marvels of centuries ago. I meant to return, but there was some one needed here for a while, and it was decided that I should come."

It was not out of any special regard for her. Helen's heart swelled with the consciousness of the gulf between them.

There was a silence for many minutes. The

insects were making a strident chirp and whir, and the voices from within drifted to them spasmodically.

"I suppose you were well taken care of," he began presently. "You see, they could not have understood if I had had time to explain. Your uncle seems to think a good deal of you in his rough, uncultured way. I offered to reimburse him for any expense you might have been, but he refused—"

"Oh, I am so glad you did," she interrupted, thankful to find a point of approval.

"I dare say you earned your keep—he seemed to think so," and her father's unemotional tone threw her back to her trembling uncertainty.

"You see I needed what money I had, and after that there was no convenient way of getting it to him. I never did fancy your aunt. Your mother was on the other side."

"Oh, tell me a little about her! How you came to—" Helen made a sudden pause.

"It was a big mistake. If I had known then that I could reach up to a wider life—but I was blind, and she thought she could be happy with me and learn to like study. But she presently hated books. She should have

had a younger man fitted to her needs. I cannot understand why she fancied me. I gave her all I could, but I couldn't sacrifice my life. When a man finds the right path for his bent he has to walk in it. Then she began to be poorly and wanted to come back to Hope. She had ceased to care for me—my way was distasteful to her. You were old enough to remember her!"

"Yes," answered Helen. "Poor mother! It was a sad mistake. And I am sorry you should have been unhappy with her."

"Oh! I had my books, my intellectual pursuits. But when we went West the people I enjoyed bored her terribly, and her pleasures were puerile to me. I offered her her freedom, but she would not accept it. She was young enough to try her fate over again. If you had been a boy I should have taken you. I doubt if she would have cared then. I hope she was happier with your uncle."

She had been fretful and unreasonable, yet had she not spoiled her own life? What had attracted her Helen could never know. She had taken this grave, unsuitable scholar rather than to have it said that she was jilted.

"And I suppose you are looking forward to

marriage?" he began abruptly, after a little silence.

"I—I have looked forward to nothing but education. I love study. I should like to go to college, and then—teach."

"What most women call education is a desultory thing of shreds and patches," he said rather sarcastically.

"But one cannot acquire everything at sixteen," she returned spiritedly.

"Whether it is possible for the feminine mind is a question with me. There must be the right foundation or the interest is generally frittered away on trivial matters. A man expects to go on to the end of his days. It is his life-work. He is continually wresting some new knowledge from the great stores of the past. He wants to know. She is satisfied to get along as well as her compeers until she marries."

Helen made no reply. Sixteen could not argue with the experience of half a century.

"This place, now—where you were at school—was it anything like Hope?"

"Oh, no! It was the county town, and the people were refined, intelligent, ambitious."

"Hope has dropped down immeasurably

since I went away. There is no strength in the modern education—little in the modern life, one may say. A great city like New York ought to stand at the head of everything, but it is miserably superficial. I shall be glad to get back to the quiet of student cloisters, or even the wilds of the old lost cities."

"But if they have all perished?" suggested Helen, not attracted by antiquity.

"And if the cities here perish, how many traces of them will remain in three or four thousand years? They are flimsy, like the knowledge so lavishly dealt out on either hand."

He began to pace up and down with the appearance of being much disturbed. There was no comfort his child could offer him.

"I think I must retire. The nights are so quiet here I can sleep well. If we wanted to drowse away life this would be an excellent place. The big cities are intolerable for their noise. We shall have other opportunities to get acquainted. Good-night."

He did not even glance back at her as she replied. Her eyes filled with tears. She did not know whether she had ever really longed for him, though he had often been in her

thoughts. Some girls were so proud of their fathers. Daisy Bell loved hers devotedly. A little ray of light stole through her keen disappointment. He was not the sort of man one would be ashamed of. No doubt it was this superior, scholarly bearing that had so ruffled Aunt Jane. But somehow there seemed more of the real delight of living in Mrs. Van Dorn.

"Oh, are you here all alone?" began the cheerful voice of Mrs. Dayton as she crossed the porch.

"Father has just gone in. Oh, sit down here! It all seems so queer and strange. And I can't get the right feeling about him."

"Oh, my child, who could in an hour or two! He is like some old fossil exhumed. When he talks so familiarly of those kings and princes one reads about in the Bible, and the glories of Chaldea and Assyria and Babylon and what happened thousands of years ago, it almost makes one believe in reincarnation—as if he must be the spirit of those bygone times renewed. And yet he isn't bad to get along with, and I think he likes the quiet here. I don't meddle with him in any way, though his room is a sight with the papers strewn about.

It would have been quite unnatural if he had not wanted to see you. But a girl isn't much to his fancy."

"Oh, do you think—that he will not really want me?"

Her heart gave a great bound, and then—was it conscience that pricked her?

"Want you? What in the world could he do with a girl? He has come to oversee some books that have to be changed on account of new discoveries, and others that are being written, and he has cases of photographs from tablets in the British Museum. And when he gets his work done he is going back—oh, no, he will not want you, so do not set your girlish affections on him. I can't imagine how he came to have such a live, eager, up-to-date daughter any more than I can imagine how Kitty Mulford came to be your mother."

"Two metals sometimes make a curious new compound. Oh, I should not want to go away. I can go back to school. I can teach for two more years of study."

"It's queer how we are all planning your life, Helen. Mr. Warfield settled it that you would stay here—and you will be welcome to my home and heart—you know that."

Helen leaned over and kissed her. Wasn't Mrs. Dayton quite like a mother?

"I do regret that Mrs. Van Dorn should have dropped out when everything looked so bright for you. She was very intelligent and companionable—and you have lost an excellent friend. Certainly she had the right to order her life as she liked, and take the good of her money."

"Oh, thank you for saying so. I can't bear to hear her blamed!" cried Helen impulsively. "She never promised me anything beyond the present, and my two years will always be a precious memory of her."

"Is it true that she did not leave anything at all?"

"There will be a little, but the nearest of kin takes it. I am glad Mrs. Aldred is one. And I want to tell you this as a secret until I decide what to do with it. There was a sum left over from my yearly allowance, two hundred and sixty-five dollars, which the lawyer thought I ought to have, and he paid it over to me. I think you are the best friend I have," she said in a tone of tender certainty.

"Thank you, dear, for the faith and affection," returned Mrs. Dayton, much moved.

"And there were a number of valuable gifts; some are hardly appropriate to my present life. So she must have had me in her heart. Then I have an offer to go back to Aldred House, as I told you. If father returns—oh, Mrs. Dayton, can you make yourself love any one because you are related? Yet I should like to love my father—I ought to."

She leaned her head down in Mrs. Dayton's lap and choked back a curious feeling that was half desire and half protest, but brought tears with it.

"My dear, it is too soon to decide anything, and you have had many shocks in the last fortnight. I wonder that you have borne them so well. Let us leave the troubles and you shall tell me about the girls. I am very much interested in that Daisy Bell."

The school talk restored Helen's tranquillity. Then Mr. Warfield joined them, and presently Mr. Conway came home. The whist party broke up. Helen went out to the kitchen with Mrs. Dayton, and had a little chat with Joanna.

"I wish I might sleep in my own little bed in your room," she said, as they were going upstairs. "I have a sort of lonely feeling. I have been so much with a host of girls."

"Why, yes," laughing cheerfully; "Joanna will bring in the cot. Then you will be my little girl again. Your trunk is in the hall, and a parcel—"

"And my satchel has the money in it, and the parcel is the box of treasures."

"We must look after them at once, Helen," and she studied the girl earnestly. "I think I would put that money in the bank and say nothing about it at present. You may need it later on."

"I should like that. And I mean to be very careful," smiling brightly. "Will you do it? I don't quite know whether my not being of age——" glancing up in some perplexity.

Mrs. Dayton considered. "Perhaps that is not the best method. Some one will be sure to ferret it out. Little towns like this do know everything sooner or later, and you will have enough of questioning and surmise. You might lend it to me, and I will deposit it. I think you can trust me. And if you want a little any time you need not hesitate to ask."

"Oh, how good you are! You can't think

what it is to me to have such a sincere friend. It is like a mother."

Mrs. Dayton pressed her to her heart and kissed her. Yes, she would like to have just such a daughter. She secretly hoped Mr. Grant had no plans for her.

They counted out the money. "It seems quite a fortune to me," and Helen smiled through her tears. "Of course at school I had some pocket-money, and some girls do spend a great deal."

"We will not inspect the treasures to-night, for we must both go to bed. I will ask Joanna

to bring in the cot."

That was soon arranged. It seemed as if two years rolled off of Helen and she was a little girl again. But what years of enjoyment they had been, years of development, and—yes, she believed Mrs. Van Dorn had truly loved her! Would her father ever love her? she wondered, for what is so sweet to youth as affection?

CHAPTER II

WITH THE OLD THINGS

MRS. DAYTON left Helen asleep the next morning when she went downstairs. "She has been tired out with everything," she thought; "and what a pretty girl she is going to be! I do wonder what he will do with her?"

Mrs. Dayton had not made up her mind about Addison Grant. He was quiet, self-contained, and very little trouble, but after the first he had scarcely mentioned his daughter. His whole heart and soul was in his work. Nothing modern was worth while. The life of the present did not interest him, it was so trivial.

Helen came down presently bright and rosy. "Oh!" she cried, "why did you not wake me? I slept shamefully late. I never even heard a bell, and at school I seldom miss it. Father will think me lazy," and she glanced around.

Two ladies were loitering over the breakfast table with a desire to see Helen Grant by daylight.

"Your father has his breakfast sent up to him," explained Mrs. Dayton. "He thinks he can write better in the morning and does not like to be disturbed—and you know of old this is a sort of Liberty Hall."

She ate some breakfast, and then she went out to talk to Joanna, who was cleaning the silver between whiles. Then a horse came trotting up the drive, and a familiar face leaned out of the buggy.

"Oh, that's Jenny!" and Helen flew out eagerly.

"Helen Grant! Why, you're a woman grown—and in short skirts! They're all crazy to see you over to the house, and I had to go to the mill this morning for Joe, so I just drove round this way. And I want you to go with me, and then I'll take you home and we will get you back some way. You've had enough happen to you for a novel, and I want to hear it all."

"I don't know that I can go," hesitatingly.

"Yes, you can. Mother 'll feel awful put

out if you don't. And it's just the morning for a drive. Can't she go, Mrs. Dayton?"

The two glanced at each other.

- "We have hardly seen Helen ourselves," said the elder lady.
- "But you'll have her all vacation, I s'pose. Yes, come, when I've taken the trouble to drive round this way."
- "You may as well go and get it over," and Mrs. Dayton gave a sort of half laugh.
 - "But-father-" in an undecided tone.
- "Yes." Mrs. Dayton nodded to Mrs. Northrup. "Wait a few moments for her.
- "Your father will be busy all the morning, and no doubt until three or four. I do suppose they are anxious to see you, and you'll have a good, hearty welcome from Uncle Jason. You will be a subject of much interest and curiosity. You see, people in these small places do not often have startling events, and they are all wondering if you are not awfully disappointed at not having a fortune left to you. So you may as well face it soon as late. Just go upstairs and say your cousin has come and wants to take you over to your uncle's. Really, Helen, I do not believe he will care."

Helen went slowly. She did not quite want to go with Jenny, but perhaps it was best. She tapped lightly at her father's door, her heart beating rapidly with an emotion she could not understand.

There was no answer, so she gave a louder knock.

"What is it?" said a muffled voice.

She ventured to open the door. Mr. Grant stared at her in a sort of surprise, as if he could not quite place her. Helen flushed.

"Well, what is it?" rather impatiently.

"My cousin Jenny is here and wants to take me over to the Center. If you——" What should she say? She was convinced he did not want her.

"Do whatever you like. I can't be interrupted just now," and his pen returned to its wonted industry.

Helen closed the door softly, but she had to wink away some tears. Not even a kindly good-morning, not a moment to spend on her when he had not seen her for years. Of course she might as well go; he did not need her in any way. She found her hat, kissed Mrs. Dayton with a sort of convulsive tenderness. How good it was to be loved!

Jenny nodded and made room for her, scrutinizing her all over before she started the gentle mare.

"My! but you're real good-looking, Helen! Your mother was pretty, father says, but you don't get much beauty from your father. He's 'most too thin to make a shadow, and so old-appearing! Such a surprise as it was to Hope. Father was clear beat! How do you like him?"

Helen flushed at the personal question.

"I have only seen very little of him—just last evening. I can't recall any old memories. It is like getting acquainted anew."

"He doesn't mean to stay, he told father, and he thinks England much superior to this country. He wished you were a boy, and he should take you back to London to be educated. Would you like to go?"

"I am not a boy and I am glad of it," and Helen gave a short, unmirthful laugh. "How is the baby, and Aunt Jane and the children?"

"All flourishing. The baby is tip-top, big and fat, and about as smart as they make 'em. Runs all over and is worse than a puppy for mischief, but Joe thinks there never was such

a little chap—father too, I guess, but mother flares up and quotes what we did as babies. We're getting along fine. Joe's bought another cow and a ten-acre lot off the Wheelers. Strange about them. They're letting everything slip through their fingers as if they were I've taken Sophy Wheeler. She wasn't worth her salt in the shop, but I can get a good bit of work out of her. Some folks need a boss. And I do ever so much machine sewing. Sam is doing real well, but the foolish fellow is waiting on Delia Gaines, and here he isn't through with his trade. Poor prospect for her," with a short laugh of disapprobation. "Mother wants 'Reely to go in the shop this fall, but father thinks she needs her at home. 'Reely's awful dumb about books. And now tell me about that queer old Mrs. Van Dorn! What a swath she cut, and then not to leave anything when she died! I call that shif'less."

"But she had no family," protested Helen.

"Well, there were lots of things she could have left money to. And it seems real mean to raise your hopes and then not do anything for you."

"She did just what she promised. She

offered me two years' training at Aldred House, and that has been splendid," Helen replied with some warmth.

- "I thought she invited you to Paris?"
- "That was the plan," rather coldly.
- "And yet she didn't have any money! She was spending it right straight along. Suppose you had been over there and this had happened?"
- "I should have been sent home, of course. There would have been money enough for that."
- "Well, I don't understand such queer goings on. How you can live upon your money and have it too? Looks like a big make-believe."
- "She had placed her fortune in a large institution and they were to pay her so much a year as long as she lived. If she had lived ten years longer she would have had just the same income," Helen replied decisively. "That is an annuity."
- "Well, I'd rather keep my own money. And I can't help thinking it sort of mean to set you up so and then not leave you anything."
 - "I can earn my own living now," proudly.

"I should feel sore about it. And people do think it queer," in a rather grudging manner.

"I can't help if they think what isn't true or right. And I came to love her very much. I shall always esteem her as one of my dearest friends. And my two years at Aldred House were delightful."

"You are a kind of queer girl, Helen. Most girls would feel awfully disappointed. But what will you do now?"

"Go back to Aldred House and teach."

Jenny looked at her in amaze. "My! but you're high-strung!" she said. "But that was your plan first off, to teach."

"Yes, and now I shall carry it out."

Some one was coming from the mill, and Jenny paused to pass the greeting of the day. And then she entertained Helen with the episode of Mr. Sleight's daughter. "She'd been engaged only three months and had the wedding-day set and her clothes made. He was a drummer for some city store. And then he never come and she didn't hear a word. She pretends to think he is dead, and has been murdered, maybe, but most folks believe he never had any idea of marrying her."

"Poor girl!" said Helen with warm sympathy.

"She shouldn't have been so ready to take up with strangers," was the sharp comment.

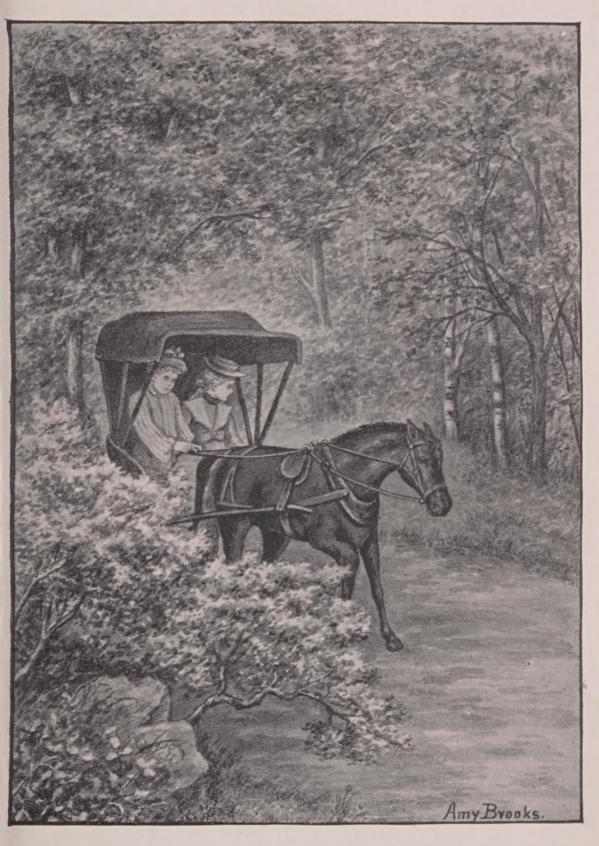
Then Jenny thought of another engagement. Ella Searing was going to do real well. She had left the High School in the winter and was getting ready.

Then they reached the mill, and after the business talk she had a sack of corn meal stowed under the buggy seat. They drove back another way, through an old shaded road. Most of the houses had a shabby aspect. Here and there one saw a well-kept garden. Jenny had good-naturedly come round to herself and Joe, a never-failing subject of gratulation. She did not take all the credit to herself, as was Aunt Jane's habit.

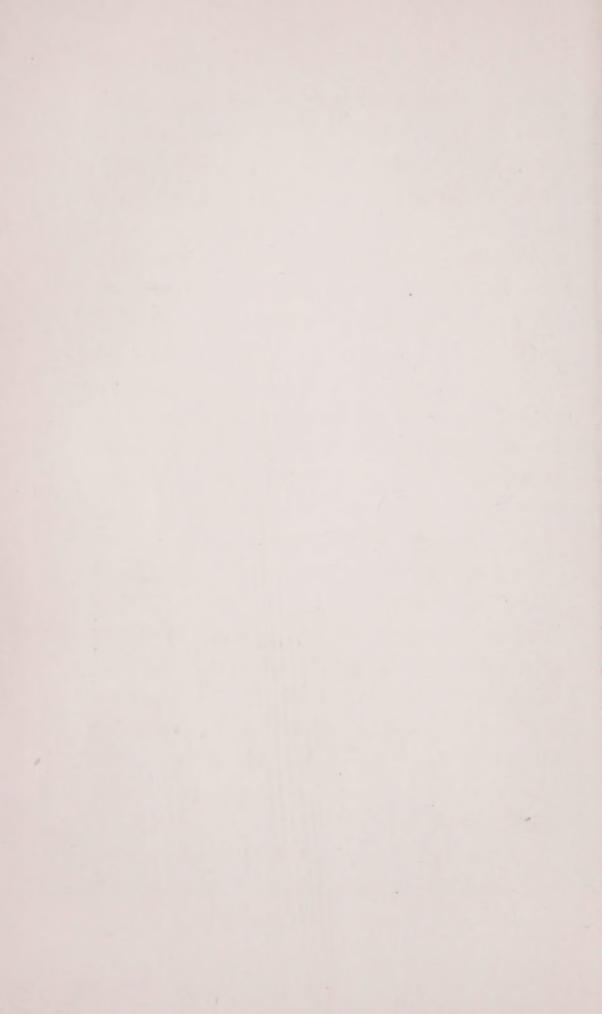
The Mulford house had been painted and really looked smart. Nat was fond of flowers and kept the front yard in order.

"Hillo!" cried a hearty voice.
"Helen, my dear girl!" and Uncle Jason was
up to the side of the buggy with outstretched
arms.

There was such tender love in the clasp, such fondness in the warm kiss, it brought the



They drove back through an old shaded road. — Page 26.



tears to her eyes. Would her father ever greet her thus?

"My dear child," he said, "my dear child!"
Then he lifted her out and still kept his arm
about her.

Yes, here was love, true and steadfast.

"I've brought her, you see!" Jenny exclaimed in triumph, as the children crowded round. "And I must go straight home, for I dare say Sophy is sitting on the porch mooning, and not a thing done for dinner. I thought it would be mean to keep the first part of her visit, but, all who can, come over to the house this afternoon. I promised some one would take Helen home—"

"I'll see to that," said Uncle Jason; and Jenny drove off.

Aunt Jane greeted her cordially. She had grown stouter and had a sort of careworn look. Aurelia had shot up into a tall girl, but there was none of Jenny's briskness about her. Fan and little Tom were quite big children, and now looked at Helen as if they were almost afraid of her.

"Come now, 'Reely, fly round and get dinner. I've worked since half past four this morning, and I want to talk to Helen. About your father, now—I never had such a surprise since the world begun. And the first minute I didn't know him from Adam. You see, 'most everybody thought he was dead. And I don't understand what he has been doing in a museum. I always thought it was a kind of trifling show-place."

"There are different kinds of museums," explained Helen. "And the British Museum is like a great library."

"Well, it seems queer for a man never to have done anything of much use, nor made any money, and always studying up something. But I never did see the sense of so much book-learning. And I suppose, Helen, all your fine plans have come to an end. It's just about what I thought. I never did take much stock in that Mrs. Van Dorn."

"No," returned Helen, resolving to keep a pleasant demeanor, "my plans are going on. Of course I did not go abroad."

"But what are you going to do?" in surprise.

"I can go back to Aldred House and teach.
I have almost engaged so to do."

"But what if your father wants you?"

"He is going back to London."

"It's a queer thing not to care for your own children!" Aunt Jane flung out.

Helen flushed, but she knew by past experience that Aunt Jane was fond of planting thorns, and that the best way was not to impale yourself upon them. But it did hurt cruelly to realize that her father was not likely to care especially for her.

"I don't know what Grant would have done with a little girl when he was poking around those old ruins he tells of," said Uncle Jason, with his kindly, humorous smile. "He's found out about those old kings of the Bible times and what they did, and they were a bad enough lot with their false gods and everything. Why, it makes the Bible seem truer than ever. And as for the care, he paid for Helen's keep while he was where he could, and he offered the rest. But I told him, Helen, that you were welcome to it all, and you had been like a child to us. I thought the better of him for offering it, but we've never missed the little you've had, and we shall always feel that you belong to us."

Helen clasped her arms around Uncle Jason's neck. "Oh!" she cried, "how good you have been to me! I love you, love you!"

Surely here was one true friend.

Of course Aunt Jane was curious to hear about Mrs. Van Dorn's death, and why it was that she had died poor, with nothing to leave.

"It has come out just about as I thought it would," she declared. "I never had much faith in her. She was too full of airs."

But since Helen was prepared to earn her own living, she was not so much an object of commiseration after all. She had reached her aim, impracticable as it had once seemed. And there was something about her that held Aunt Jane a little in check, a quiet dignity and assured manner that always gently overrules ignorant prejudices.

The dinner was rather jolly, but household matters had not improved much. Oh, why could they not see how much smoother the wheels of daily life would revolve with an engineer who set herself resolutely about the work in kindliness instead of the captious jangling. Helen tried to evolve a little harmony by some bright stories of school life that did interest the younger ones.

Aunt Jane was rather affronted by her vivacity. She wanted her to feel very much disappointed over the turn in her affairs, and

surely she did not act so. She was taking her father too tranquilly; she was somehow—heartless—yes, that was it.

The dishes were cleared away and Aunt Jane took her little nap. She was not sure that she ought to go over to Jenny's, there was so much sewing to do—two blouses for Nat and other things.

"Take it along," suggested Aurelia. "And Jen said she'd tuck my skirt. I just hate to sew!"

"What is it that you like to do in the way of work?" asked her mother sharply.

"While you are getting ready I want Helen to come out and see the calves and the flock of Guineas. And you haven't seen Prince. He's my new horse. Come," said Uncle Jason.

Helen was glad to follow him. Tom went along.

"Mother gets as full of worries as she used," he said in a low tone. "I keep hoping she'll take things easier, but 'Reely isn't half the help Jen used to be. Strange how different children are! Now Jen makes the sort of house-keeper I like—and one would think working years in a shop wouldn't fit her for it. She's merry, too, and always ready to go off with

Joe. And the money that girl earns would surprise you. Oh! there are the Guineas. Ain't the little ones cute?"

There were half a dozen hens, two of them with young broods that looked like little birds.

"Oh, how pretty and dainty they are!" cried Helen delightedly. "And you so seldom see Guinea chicks."

"There in the lot are the two calves, both Alderneys. I think they have such nice faces—pretty, too. The biggest one is six months old. I'm going to raise some fine stock. Nat's taken a fancy to farming," laughed Uncle Jason. "Sam never was much stuck on it. Here, Dilly," as the calf came up to the fence and put her nose through to her master's hand. "Now, ain't them beautiful brown eyes? Dilly, here's some clover-heads, better than any you'll find in your lot," and he nodded confidently.

"Uncle Jason, I don't wonder everything loves you." She turned and put her arms about him. "And I shall always love you. I'm afraid I haven't written as often as I ought, but I shall try to hereafter."

"And if you want anything, child—I'm getting quite forehanded now, and that's why

I want mother to take it a little easier—but I'd like to do for you as well. And it must have been a hard blow to have that old lady die when she was so good to you. People can have queer streaks and be good and kindly, too. When your father goes back—you see you won't have any real dependence, for I doubt if he's made much money, and he looks as if he wasn't going to last forever—I want you to come to me in any little want or trouble. Girls need money sometimes. You needn't be afraid——"

"Oh, Uncle Jason!" She kissed him in a burst of tenderness, and wished he had been her real father—but she did not want Aunt Jane for a mother. "I don't know what to say for such love;" and her voice was tremulous with emotion.

- "Promise me you will."
- "I promise. I am glad to promise."
- "Now we'll go and see Prince. Here's another bunch of clover-heads, Dilly."

But as he turned Dilly gave him an almost upbraiding look.

"Betty's getting old. I've had her twelve years, and Nat wanted a new horse. Nat's a good boy. Now, isn't he a fine fellow?"

Prince whinnied with pleasure at his master's voice and looked at him with eyes quite as beautiful as Dilly's. "You shall have a ride behind him when you go back. But you'll come and make us a real visit, won't you? You won't have to study all the time."

"Yes, I will come." She would do that for Uncle Jason's pleasure.

Prince came out of the stall and had his good points displayed. He threw up his head and arched his neck as if he knew he was being admired.

"I bought him at a bargain, too. He wasn't so sleek and well-fed then, and had had rather rough treatment. Horses are grateful—they seem a'most human sometimes."

"Mother's ready to go over to Jen's, and I am too," announced Fan, flying out to them.

Uncle Jason stooped a little, and kissed Helen's white forehead. "I think I'll be along with Prince between four and five," he said.

Aunt Jane was giving orders to Aurelia, who was rather sulky because she could not be of the party. Helen put on her hat and she and Fanny walked down the path, or

rather the child impelled her. They were to take the short cut through the pasture lot.

"I don't feel as if I ought to stir a step," Aunt Jane commenced, out of breath. "There are twenty things suffering to be done and 'Reely isn't worth a pin if you take your eyes off of her. I don't see what's in the girl! She's no more like Jenny than a kitten's like a snail!"

Evidently Aunt Jane's system had not worked here, Helen thought.

The walk was not long, though it was pretty hot. The end piazza was half inclosed in vines and on the shady side, looking very inviting. Jenny sat there in a light print dress, while the baby was climbing up and down, fenced off in one corner. Jenny rose and welcomed her mother, took her hat, and seated her in the big splint rocker, talking in a cordial fashion. Then she opened the roll of work.

"Where's 'Reely's skirt?" she inquired.

"I didn't bring it. She ought to be able to tuck her own skirts. You did before you were as old as she. I declare I'm tired to death with that girl. I don't see what she'll ever be good for. And I didn't know about leaving the work—"

"But you've left it," and Jenny laughed.
"Now you're just going to have a rest. Tell me about the blouses and I'll do them to-morrow. I have a lot of button-holes to make, and we'll sit here and talk. I was afraid you wouldn't come."

"And I ought to be home this blessed minute. I declare, when you have a house full of children, and milk and butter to see to, and no one to lend a hand—as you may say—though Nathan is good about doing chores when he thinks of them."

Fanny was making a diversion. She had lifted little Joe out of his pen and placed him on the grass, just below the two steps of the porch. He was laughing and crowing with delight.

Helen sat on the step much amused with his antics. He was round and rosy if not so pretty, and his blue eyes shone with mischief.

The two housekeepers branched off into domestic affairs awhile, but Aunt Jane felt she had really been defrauded in the matter of Helen's confidence, so she began to ply her with questions, ably assisted by Jenny. They professed to feel very indignant that Mrs. Van

Dorn had made no provision for her, in spite of all the girl could say.

"Though it's just about what I expected," declared Aunt Jane. "And think of an old woman like that careerin' round Europe and dropping dead at a party. Some one said she was past eighty. It would have looked more respectable if she'd staid in her own country and had a nice little cottage and lived prudently, though I s'pose then you'd had to go and wait on her. I should think you'd had learning enough;" glancing at Helen.

"Not for the kind of teaching I hope to do. I am very grateful for this help and the chance to go on," returned the girl.

"What does your father say about it?"

"We have had no chance to talk. He was very busy when I came away this morning, but since he expects to return to London—"

"And it will be just the same way with him—you mark my words. He will drop out some day and have just about enough to bury him. It's lucky you don't count on any one's money."

"And am satisfied to earn my own," was the cheerful rejoinder.

"I hope you'll have a little common sense,

though I don't see where you would get much on either side. But one ought to have some care for the future. There's sickness, and your mother was consumptive. Your father looks as if a breath might blow him away. And here I am wasting my time when there's so much to do in the world," in a tone of passionate regret.

"Lucky that it doesn't all come to us," said Jenny with a laugh. "You may pull out these bastings if you must work," throwing some work over in her lap.

"Oh, come and walk," urged Fanny. "Aren't the summer pears ripe, Jen?"

"Well, hardly. Don't let Joe have any."

"Helen's queer," began Aunt Jane. "I should think she'd feel dreadful not to be left a penny of all the money that woman wasted! I s'pose her heart's set on teaching—she gets that from her father. And she doesn't seem to take the death much to heart, either. I remember she didn't make much fuss over her mother's death. Some children go on dreadfully. I hope Fan would feel worse over me."

"You're not going to die for years and years. I hope you'll have great-grandchil-

dren. Little Joe 'll be grown up before you know it."

Helen glanced about the orchard, the cornfield, the distant potato-patch. Everything looked snug and tidy. Some cows were grazing peacefully or standing in the stream of water that ran through the pasture lot. Little Joe did dozens of absurd things, ate cloverheads and tried to catch both birds and toads, and seemed to be amused over his non-success. Fan stopped every little while to hug him, or help him when he tumbled down.

"He's just the sweetest thing!" she cried enthusiastically. "I wish I could come over and live with Jen, but she has Sophy. Jen is so full of fun. Helen, do you suppose when people grow old they get cross and scoldy? I'm glad I don't have to grow old in ever and ever so long. Do you remember the Peters children? You know their father drank and went off somewhere. Last winter their mother died, and the three little children had to go to the county house. The Deanes took Silas to work on the farm, and Mary had to be put out. Father wanted mother to take her, but she wouldn't. I wish we had a workgirl, then I would come over here. I s'pose

you'll never come and live with us again, Helen? I should love you worlds better than I love 'Reely."

"I do not suppose I shall be in Hope very much, except for visits. I'm going back to school."

"Do you really love school?" wonderingly.

"Yes, I do," in a cordially positive tone.

Fanny sighed. The idea was incomprehensible.

They found a few pears—windfalls—and were eating them when Joe senior came across the orchard and caught up his boy in his arms. They walked back presently, and the elder Joe was quite curious about Helen's father.

The girl was glad enough when she saw Prince nodding his head and heard Uncle Jason's voice.

"I declare, Jason's on the road half the time with that horse! He acts as if he never owned one before, but Betty's plenty good enough for me," began Aunt Jane complainingly. "And I ought to go home this blessed minute."

"No, you'll stay to supper. Let 'Reely look after things. Helen and Fan, come in and have a piece of cake and a glass of milk."

The dining room was cool and nice, with

fresh white curtains at the window, and the kitchen beyond was snug and tidy. Sophy Wheeler sat there shelling peas. She had been an old schoolmate, and Helen went out and spoke to her. A stolid, dull-eyed girl, who looked as if she was not more than half awake, and who blushed up to the roots of her hair at the greeting.

"Sophy, just make a cup of tea—two—and take them out on the porch. I think father would like one."

That was a pretty and gracious thought in Jenny, and Helen glanced up with a smile.

The girls enjoyed their cake, and then Helen put on her hat.

"If you're not going to study all vacation, come over and make us a visit," said Aunt Jane. "You know you're always welcome."

"Oh, do, do!" and Fan squeezed her hand.

Helen was glad to be seated in the buggy beside Uncle Jason. It had been a rather unsatisfactory day, yet it was a duty, and she was glad it was done. Her heart warmed to Uncle Jason with a new fervor. It did seem as if his way might be made a little pleasanter.

"Jen's got a nice house, hasn't she, and a

nice baby, and, for that matter, a nice husband, too. Joe Northrup is smart and sensible. And Jen doesn't load up everything with a dozen yesterdays and a dozen to-morrows."

"Jenny is a good deal like you, Uncle Jason," Helen said, with a sudden sense of comparison.

He laughed softly and a light twinkled in his eyes.

"Well, mother was bright and perky when she was first married. Children are a care, but Sam's doing well and Nathan's a comfort, and the others will grow up about right, I guess. Jenny's a good daughter."

It was a lovely ride, with the sun going over westward, and a pleasant talk that brought them nearer together. Uncle Jason was not cultivated, but he had a warm, generous heart. Come what might, she could always go to him as a very dear friend, beside the relationship.

Uncle Jason would not go in; he had some business. She caught sight of her father sitting on the porch, with a little stand piled up with papers.

CHAPTER III

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

"HAVE you been over there all day?" nodding his head. "I did not think you were going to stay."

"Oh, did you want me? We spent the afternoon at my cousin's." An uncertain light hovered about her face, making half shadows.

"Oh, not specially. I was very busy until about an hour ago. I wanted to send some matter off by mail and Mr. Warfield took it."

"It was a duty to go," she subjoined half apologetically.

"Mr. Warfield said you were a good reader—if they had not spoiled you in that school. Do you know enough Latin not to blunder? If you don't, get a translation."

"I am afraid I shall not distinguish myself in Latin. I have some of the modern poets that I am fond of—Whittier and both of the Brownings and—"

He made a gesture with his hand as well as his head.

"There have been no real poets in modern times," he declared. "Chaucer and Ben Jonson and Shakespeare and Milton tried at it and now and then struck out a spark. We have to go back to Homer. But they had something to write about in those days. They lived the sort of lives that made poems. It wasn't all money-making, materialism, and weak sentiment. Well, go and get a Latin book and let me see how far you have gone.

She went to her room, bathed her face, and searched her trunk. Yes, there was the Æneid. There seemed nothing else handy, and she felt rather more certain of that. But a sensation of fear rose in her heart. She would not mind reading for Mr. Warfield, she thought, but her father was a greater scholar. She felt very school-girlish as she came out on the porch and took her seat not far from him. And then she could not steady her voice with those cold, unresponsive eyes upon her that chilled enthusiasm. Her face began to burn, her pulses to quiver, and she knew she was doing wretchedly.

"Oh, stop, stop!" he cried. "That is enough to rasp every nerve in one's body. If you can do no better than that—"

"I believe I am a little tired with the excitements of the day," and her voice trembled perceptibly. "Yes, I have done better many a time."

"It is folly, I suppose, to expect a girl to appreciate that. Love ditties are more to their taste, I fancy. Listen."

He did not take the book, but, folding his arms, began to repeat some of his favorite passages in a tone that did electrify her with its depth of power and appreciation. His voice lost its measured indifference. It was almost like listening to some fine, stirring strains of music. She was sorry to have him pause, and the silence brought back her embarrassment.

"And the Greek?" he asked presently.

"I have not begun Greek, and the Latin was quite difficult at first. It has been less than two years—"

"Mr. Warfield considered you quite a scholar. But you have a great deal to learn, and whether you are able to go down to the heart of things—"

His glance, that seemed to weigh and gauge her, made her shrink as if from a cold blast.

"Yes. We will begin to-morrow. I shall not be so engrossed for several days now, and when I have truly sifted your capabilities,"—he made a long pause,—"that will determine my views."

She was very glad to see Mr. Warfield coming up the path. He had mailed the package, and gave the change into the cold, thin hand. He had also found a book in the library that Mr. Grant had inquired about. Then he turned and questioned Helen a little about her visit, and commented on the steadiness with which the Center was dropping down, and how the school was falling off.

"It doesn't seem to be the Center of anything now," he commented, with a rather cynical laugh.

Helen was glad to get away, and went up to her room. Mrs. Dayton had shaken out her gowns and hung them in the wardrobe. She had not brought all her belongings. There was a box in the storeroom at school, and it seemed a link in the chain drawing her back again.

"For of course I shall go," she said decisively to herself.

She put on a pretty white gown and some soft pink ribbons. When her father came in to dinner he stared at her in a sort of mild surprise, as if he had hardly seen her before. She had a good deal of color and her eyes were alight with a nervous brilliancy.

She was very glad afterward that the old retired clergyman, Mr. Walters, came over to discuss some historical points in the Old Testament. Then Mr. Warfield said:

"Let us take a little walk. They will not miss us, and I have hardly seen you. Then, I must start on my vacation in a day or two, and Mrs. Dayton and I have some plans for you to consider."

They passed out of the gate and took the path under the trees. It was the perfection of a summer night, and the stars were slowly stealing through the blue vault.

"Of course, matters have changed very much with you," he began, after a silence of many minutes. "I am sorry that any of it happened since it had to end this way. Yet it may be better to have it end now than two years hence."

"Oh, I can never be sorry that I have had these two delightful years, and that I have known and loved Mrs. Van Dorn," she exclaimed with deep feeling.

"Then—you do not feel disappointed about—about the money? Most girls would."

"She never promised me anything but the two years until she sent for me, and that seems now like a fairy dream. Oh, I never thought about any money;" and her earnestness established her truth.

"I still think it would have been better to have remained here and entered the High School. I have no fear but that you would have gotten along somehow. Two years would have taken you a long way on your plan."

"My plan?" she repeated vaguely.

"Oh, you surely haven't forgotten what we talked about the last few weeks over at the Center? Or have you lost your ambition to teach?"

"Oh, no, no! And I have resolved to compass it. I have had an offer—oh, you can hardly imagine what a lovely friend Mrs. Aldred has been to me. She is a charming, cultivated woman with a great love for girls

in her heart. I hardly know how I could have borne the blow but for her sympathy and love, and her true regard for Mrs. Van Dorn."

"Who was a very selfish old woman," he interrupted.

"You did not like her," Helen subjoined frankly. "But I came to know—many things;" and there was a tremble in her voice. "I shall always revere her memory. And it stabs me to the quick to have people make such mistakes about her."

"You are very young, inexperienced," he returned in a gentler tone.

"Mrs. Aldred has gone abroad for a year, and her friend, a Mrs. Wiley, takes the school. But Mrs. Aldred made this arrangement before she went: that I should teach in some classes, and have my board and tuition in the higher branches in return. Then came the word about father, and I could not accept until I knew——"

"And if he objects?"

"He is going to London again. I am not high enough up in attainments, nor old enough to be of any service to him there, and, frankly, I should not want to spend my days over deadand-gone people. You see, I can take care of myself," and there was a touch of pride in her tone.

"Well, you have planned it all out! I must confess that I do not think it best. You have other friends besides this Mrs. Aldred, who may step out of life as suddenly as Mrs. Van Dorn. Mrs. Dayton loves you sincerely. I think, as the years go on, she longs for a daughter, and would be glad to have you in that place. We have talked it over. Enter the High School here, and in three years you will have your diploma and be fitted to teach anywhere, while a boarding-school certificate is never held in as high esteem. I am interested in you. I will do anything to help you along. You certainly will rank higher with school boards."

"You are very good to take so much interest."

"But the tone says I have not convinced you. Think a little of Mrs. Dayton's love."

Helen gave a long sigh. There were the girls, the life that was so enjoyable. And Westchester was such a lovely old town, its people were so cultivated. That association was almost an education in itself.

"I shall be bitterly disappointed, since the

way is clear for you to come back. It will be for your best interests, even if you can't see it now. And I really think you owe me some consideration. I discerned your capabilities back there at the Center, and even then I was considering how you could gain the opportunity you really deserved. And I will tell you something else, a guess of mine that I think would come out pretty true—your uncle is warmly interested in your welfare. I believe he would do something for you."

"Oh, I am quite sure he would if I needed it," she answered in a heartfelt tone.

"Can you find any better friends?"

"I don't know that I can," she answered frankly.

"Then talk the matter over with Mrs. Dayton. I shall go away with a contented mind if you can assent to our wishes."

"I must consider both sides," hesitatingly.

"Consider the future. Here you can spend your whole time in studying; there the teaching will interrupt. You will find it much more difficult."

Then they turned around and walked back. Helen was tossed this way and that, and much disturbed. How could she cross the wishes of these friends; Mrs. Dayton, who would be like a mother, and Uncle Jason, who had grown so tender. Mr. Warfield was proud of her. He had roused her to a better understanding of herself and the desires of her higher nature. But there were the dear girls, and she should always be so interested in Juliet Craven. She could help her. And Juliet stood so alone. She would like to give, she had nothing but herself.

Two of the ladies were out on the porch listening to the talk, and, as Mrs. Parsons said afterward, every step was an evidence of the truth of the Bible as Mr. Grant discoursed of the old places and wars and rulers and nations. Helen sat on the step thinking of the time she had been asked to make her choice two years ago. And suppose her father should decide that it was best for her to remain here?

He summoned her to his room rather early the next morning. She did quite creditably in her Latin, and then he took up Greek. She knew most of the letters, but it was hard work, and he was not a patient instructor. Her brain was in a whirl, and she was thankful when lunch time arrived.

Mr. Warfield was not in the most amiable mood, and gave her a curt nod.

"What kept you upstairs all the morning?" he asked sharply.

"Father and Greek," she said, with a glint of humor. "And it was the tug of war."

"My train starts at two. I'm sorry. I wanted to go over the ground again, but I'll write to you about it. And you've had no chance to talk to Mrs. Dayton. But I am quite sure you will come to look at it in the only sensible light."

There were others to say good-bye to Mr. Warfield and declare they would miss him. The moments ran by, and he picked up his valise, starting down the street with a stride. Helen felt relieved, and yet conscience-smitten that she did so.

"If you don't mind you might go down to the post office for me," her father remarked.

She was very glad. Yet the Greek words danced before her eyes like specters. "It is so hard when you don't understand a bit of it, and so easy when you have known it forty or fifty years!" she thought.

How she did miss the girls and their merry talk, their many little helps. And her music!

She could hardly have that here, and she had come to love it very much. Had she outgrown all this old life? Oh, she *must* go back to Westchester! She really would not be happy here, and content made life so much easier.

There was quite a parcel for her father. Some of the proofs of engravings did not suit him at all, and he had to compare and erase lines and change the queer-looking signs. Then he said:

"I wish you'd read for me. When I go to the city again I must get some new spectacles; these bother me. Now you read slowly, for I may want to make corrections. When I hold up my pencil, stop, and then I shall not have to talk."

"You look tired," she said with a touch of sympathy. "Was I a very dull and trying pupil this morning?"

"I haven't been teaching of late, indeed, for a long time. I wonder if you can read that?"

It looked like hieroglyphics to her and she hesitated. His cold eyes were not encouraging.

"You're not used to my writing. I think I'll read and you may copy."

She took the tablet and pen and he began. At first it seemed tiresome, for when she had achieved a sentence he wanted it altered, but after a little she became interested in the stories the kings had told on the cylinders and clay tablets, of their mighty deeds, of their victories, and, alas! of their cruelties, that made her shudder.

"Let me see," he demanded suddenly. She held the tablet before him.

"Why, you write well. That's almost like print," in a tone of commendation.

She flushed with gratification that she had pleased him in one particular. But presently the sun came around to the window and the wind died away. It was very warm, and she was tired, but he did not seem to mind. The little clock struck six.

"It will soon be dinner time," she suggested.

"That is the worst of other people's houses. When you are alone your time is all your own. Well, you are a better hand at copying than you are at Greek, but we must try it again in the morning. I suppose you want to go?" looking up as if he would fain detain her.

"I must change my dress-"

He nodded reluctantly.

She went out of the room and crossed the hall, then dropped into Mrs. Dayton's big willow rocker. And so this was her father! She ought to—oh, you couldn't love any one on so short a notice! She wiped some tears from her eyes. She felt sorrowful, depressed, and a sense of loss swept over her.

"I am afraid I am not meant for a great scholar," and she half smiled through her tears. "Perhaps I am commonplace. I like the everyday things, the thoughts and methods of to-day, and the poems and the beautiful stories and the fresh, eager people. Oh, dear! And there's the dinner bell. I'd like a walk and a talk with some merry girls and some delightful songs. I don't seem to know any of the girls here."

She came down to dinner quite tranquil outwardly, and found two ladies, old friends of Mrs. Dayton, had come to make a few days' visit. She stole out afterward to dry the dishes for Joanna, and Mrs. Dayton smiled and kissed her in passing. Then she found her father had gone to his room, and she was not sure he would like to be disturbed. So she wandered about, walked up and down the

shady street a little, planning what she should do. Would it be ungracious to Mrs. Dayton to accept the position at Aldred House? She felt that it would be painful to refuse her unless she had decided. Perhaps Mr. Warfield had said rather more than was warranted, though she knew well that Mrs. Dayton loved her.

The next morning she read Latin and studied Greek, and in the afternoon read for her father while he amended and made notes for her to copy. And she really had not an hour to herself until evening, when Mrs. Dayton was entertaining her friends on the porch. So she wrote her letter of acceptance, a half guilty feeling struggling with a sense of relief, and her spirits rose almost to a point of blitheness. It gave her courage to go through the next day, but the day after she suddenly gave out. What with the steady application, the lack of exercise, and the employment that was becoming distasteful, she paused for a moment, while the room seemed full of black motes and shooting stars and beginning to whirl round, while her breath came with a gasp. She rose and went to the window.

[&]quot;What is it?" asked her father in amaze.

"I felt queer, dizzy," and she leaned against the frame, drawing in long reviving breaths.

"Helen," her father said sharply, "I hope you are not going to have nerves and whims! You do not look like it. With your physique you ought to have fine health, and strength enough for a little steady application."

"I have not been confined like this," she began tremulously. "And it is very warm to-day. I have been used to regular exercise and—my head aches."

"You must exert your will and not give way to these vagaries. Girls and women spoil themselves by indulging in all sorts of moods. They are not rightly brought up. Yet I shouldn't think your Aunt Mulford was much of a hand to tolerate fitful and capricious humors."

Years ago he had given in to them to some extent, but the bondage had come by slow degrees, and he had pitied his wife for the sad mistake, partly his own, and had not the courage to be stern with her, even though he went against his better judgment. Since then he had only himself to consult. He had lived out of the world of women and among books, and grown blind and obtuse; selfish as one does

when one follows out a particular bent that seems the greatest of all great things to him. He had ruled underlings with a rather heavy hand, and when they made a protest he never parleyed—they went. The warm strivings for humanity had no place in his soul. Nothing was of any account but his work, the grand deciphering of long-ago times from brick and stone.

"My head doesn't often ache," Helen said rather resentfully. "But—I think I can't do any more this afternoon."

He made no further protest. Helen went slowly out of the room. She was glad Mrs. Dayton had gone somewhere with her friends. She threw herself into the big chair and gave way to a fit of weeping that was almost hysterical, but it was a relief to her overcharged feelings.

"Poor mamma!" she sobbed. She could not know that in those days, if she had been old enough, she would have pitied her father the most. But she had a strong, healthy temperament, and when the first burst was over nature righted herself. She bathed her eyes, brushed out her hair, breathed long draughts of rose and violet-water, and changed her

clothing, which gave her a sense of freshness, and then looked longingly out of the window. Some vague gray clouds were drifting over the sun, and there came up a strong easterly breeze.

"It will rain some time," she mused, "but it will be a storm. Oh, I'd like a good rainy day; I'm tired of sunshine. And I'll go out for a walk. Why, I do believe I'm soul and brain hungry for a day walk. How father can stand it——"

She put on her hat and slipped down the back stairs, nodding to Joanna, who was stemming currants for jam and jelly, and then went along the shaded street where the houses grew farther and farther apart, the gardens larger. Flowers were blooming, trees fruiting, grasses of all kinds nodded to each other as if they were holding converse. Birds flashed hither and thither with an occasional warble. How beautiful everything was! And these old nations her father was so interested in had spread ruin and desolation, cut down palms and olives and cedars, and laid waste everywhere, carried away thousands from their cherished homes! Oh, thank God, she did not live in those days.

She might go to the Library. She wondered if Miss Westerly had forgotten her. Why, she had not really been anywhere except to the Center. To-morrow Uncle Jason would be in, and oh! how glad she would be to see him. What a good thing it was to be loved truly and sincerely.

She walked away her headache and nervousness. She filled her soul with the beautiful sights and sounds, the bloom, the groups playing croquet, the children tumbling about or playing tag, the changeful sky where the blue seemed conquered by drifts of gray growing darker and thicker. Now and then some one from a porch nodded to her, but she hurried past lest they should speak. She did not want to talk to any one-not even Miss Westerly, and there would likely be some old schoolmates in the Library. But she stopped at the post office. The mail had just come in. There was a package for her father, and-oh, joy! two letters for herself. That round hand was Daisy Bell's, and that rather cramped style with sharpened letters was Juliet Craven's. She could have kissed them both. Oh, how good it was to be in touch with the world—her world—once more!

She hurried a little on her homeward way. She met Mrs. Searing, who was quite effusive. Louise would call on her soon; she was getting ready to go away. Of course she had to say, "How strange everything was about that old Mrs. Van Dorn's death. Weren't you dreadfully disappointed about not going abroad?"

The tears came to Helen's eyes. "I should not have minded that if she could have lived," was the grave answer.

Oh, why must every one use the prefix "old"? To her she would never be old or young, but a dear, dear friend.

She tapped at her father's door and laid his mail on the table. How close the room seemed!

"Thank you," he made reply. Then as she turned, "I hope your head is better. I'm not much accustomed to headaches."

It sounded almost sarcastic, but he did not mean it for that. Perhaps he had been a little sharp an hour ago.

"Yes. The walk has made me feel quite like myself. I have been used to a good deal of exercise and plenty of air."

He looked as if he did not quite comprehend.

He was used to days and nights of work, and often hated to leave off.

She turned and left the room slowly. Why, she was the picture of health! Women were strange beings, and doubtless they were not meant for students. They had no breadth, no strong grasp of the knowledge of mighty worlds. And if Helen had consulted him then, he would have said:

"Oh, go back to school, by all means."

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CHAPTER IV

SCHOOLGIRLS AGAIN

Helen walked out to the end of the porch. In this far corner there was a seat, but it was well-nigh hidden by the vines. She balanced her letters. Which should she read first? Daisy's would be bright and gay, with no perplexing appeals. She knew she should want to ponder over Juliet's. Yes, she would skim over Daisy's.

Oh, how full of girlish exuberant sweetness it was, curiosity as well. "Tell me everything about your father," it said. "We have done nothing but talk the happenings over, and mamma is so full of sympathy for you. Both of the girls are away. Annis is engaged and will be married during the winter. Willard is home now and will take his degree next year. Mamma has had a bad sprained ankle, and will not go away anywhere, and we have all planned that you shall come this summer

sure. Papa will meet you in New York. This time we are not going to take any excuses."

There was a page or two of the tenderest persuasion, there was the extravagant love that firmly believed it never could care so much for any other girl, and bits of attractive home life. "Then, they would both study, for of course Helen was *sure* to return to Aldred House. I know what I am prophesying about," was added mysteriously.

How sweet, how dear it was! Only school-girl love, of course, but then they were school-girls and not women. She mused over it many minutes. Yes, she would like to go. They would not have asked her twice if they did not mean to make her a welcome guest. Oh, how could she plan it?

There was almost a pang as she took up Juliet's letter, as if she had neglected her. Ah, if Juliet could only see her! There was so much to tell, and she was so puzzled about what she should do. She had gone to her friend, Mrs. Howard. Mr. Davis had visited her at once. Mrs. Davis' plan was to take her abroad for a year or so. She would be of age then, and mistress of part of her fortune, but Mr. Davis would remain the trustee. He really

insisted this was the rightful course, and that she was in some sort bound to consider his wishes. "If I were strong and resolute like you—but I am so afraid of being talked over. Can my guardian decide and send me? Mrs. Howard thinks not. How can I get courage to say decidedly that I am going back to Aldred House? 'A woman grown,' he said. 'You have education enough. What you want is the polish society gives. A year abroad will do you more good than a dozen years in school. Men do not care for learned women.'

"But I want it for myself. There are so many fascinating paths in knowledge. And you will surely come back? I love Mrs. Howard for all her kindness and interest in me, and it is such an unselfish interest. Yet I long for a girl friend as well. Oh, why can't I take off the four years and be nearer yours? I feel as if I had hardly outgrown a strange, dwarfing childhood. I am younger in heart to-day than when I was living with poor grandfather. Sometimes I pity him so for all he has lost out of life. The first two days I was here there was a charming woman past seventy with the loveliest snowy hair and soft pink cheeks, who

seemed interested in all the affairs of to-day, who read poetry beautifully, who had not given up her music nor her French nor her Latin, who had been abroad with some grand-daughter, and who was like a girl herself. She charmed me beyond everything. And she said, 'Go back to school until you feel in a measure satisfied with yourself; then go on learning all the rest of your life.'

"You will surely come back, won't you? I should be lost without you. Write to me, strengthen me to refuse Mr. Davis. Give me courage as you have before. If I could see you! Can't we plan a meeting? Mrs. Howard would make you most welcome. But write to me at once. What if your father should have different plans for you! I dare not think of that."

What if her father should have other plans? But she had an almost certainty that he could do nothing with her abroad. If he were going to spend years in the British Museum over the piles of tablets and bricks and cylinders with their weird inscriptions, what help could a half educated girl be? It was not like this work that had to be put in plain English. No, he would not want her.

The next day it rained and was cooler. She pursued the usual routine, but her father somehow seemed to evince more consideration. Early in the morning she had answered Miss Craven's letter. Daisy's she would consider.

Sunday was a day of change for her, of rest as well. She went to church with Mrs. Dayton, and met acquaintances who inquired where she had kept herself, and if she was too much engrossed to see callers. But she noticed that her father worked all day, just coming down on the porch in the evening and seldom joining in any conversation.

A few days after he was summoned to the city on some business.

"I do not know how long I shall remain," he said to Helen. "I like the quiet here to work in, and I think the air is better than in the crowded city. I suppose you will—stay here?" rather hesitatingly, hardly as if it was put as a question.

Helen's heart beat with a quick bound. This was the golden moment.

"I should like to make a visit to a school-mate——"

He nodded with an air of indifference.

"Well," as if he had considered. "And here is a little money. Old scholars are seldom very rich. You do miss your friend, I dare say, but it seems as if she had not quite come up to the promise of things."

"Thank you." Helen flushed as she took the roll of bills. Mrs. Van Dorn's benefits had never been a weight upon her, and now she wondered why. She felt almost as if she would rather not accept it, but to decline would be an indignity. And was he not her father?

"I want you to go on with the Greek," he continued. "It is the key to many things. There is so much for you to learn," and he sighed with a sound of impatience.

Then they said good-bye without even shaking hands, and she watched him with a mist in her eyes. If he had not come back she could have in some measure believed Aunt Jane's estimate of him was unjust. But he had a sense of honor about his child. She gave thanks for that.

So in the soft vanishing of twilight she lived the days over and they seemed a dream, though some of them had been long enough in the passing. There was a rift in the gray purple, and the blue stole softly through with two stars. What a picture it made. Miss Gertrude Aldred might paint it. But she was seeing other beautiful sights, and having mother love to gladden it all.

There was a step coming the length of the porch. She knew the figure in the vague light. Mrs. Dayton brought a camp chair and seated herself.

"I thought I should find you here," she began in her cheerful tone. "Why, I feel as if we had scarcely seen each other. What with my guests and your father, we have hardly had a moment. He has kept you very busy. Are you going to be his secretary?"

"Oh, I should not know enough. And presently this work will be through," Helen answered, but there was a sudden misgiving that turned her heart cold.

"I suppose he is a great scholar. It's odd that you should be seized upon by two old people. But Mrs. Van Dorn had some charming ways when she was in the humor. And she was modern. She was so interested in all the matters of to-day, while your father seems to think nothing is worth while that hasn't the stamp of antiquity and lies in ruins. Yet he is a very nice, gentlemanly person."

Helen wondered what she would answer. There was a prolonged silence.

"Has he any plans for your future?" Mrs. Dayton asked in a tone of kindly interest.

"I think not. He expects to return to London. Oh, I do not know what he would do with me. I am so glad to be a girl!"

There was a kind of joyous relief in the last sentence, and a smile one could imagine.

"Mr. Warfield and I have been talking you over. He is very warmly interested in your future, and "-she reached over and clasped Helen's hand-"you know that I am too. I have come to have a very fervent regard for you. You couldn't make your home at the Center, though Uncle Jason loves you quite as tenderly as if you were his own. There's something about you that goes to one's heart. I don't know where you get it from, I am sure, unless it is a special gift of God to make your path easier and to bring you to the things you most desire. Very few girls I find care so much for learning. They count on lovers and marriage before they are in long skirts. Warfield does get so tired with them. what can you expect of ordinary country girls? And I'm not sure but they are better off married and in homes of their own. But this was the point I wanted to get at. He wishes you to stay here and go to school. I want you to stay here with me. I'd like some one to take an interest in, to be a sort of daughter to my declining years," and she gave a soft laugh. "If you were teaching you might have to go away afterward, but there would be vacations and the looking forward, the letters. But anyway, there would be three years that I should have you, and I'm sure Uncle Jason would like it. You needn't ever count up the cost, for it is all pure love, and I should be glad to do it."

"Oh, Mrs. Dayton!" She clasped her arms about the elder woman's neck, and then put her head down on her bosom, crying softly, deeply touched, for she knew it was all true, and she had found a faithful friend.

"Of course we can't quite plan it on account of your father. But I wanted you to know and to think it over. I'll get a piano, too, and you can go on with your music. The summer the Lessings were here I had half a mind to. I suppose I shall always keep a few boarders in the summer—I like the coming and going. Sometimes the going is very satis-

factory," and she laughed with a sense of amusement. "I wanted you to know so there need be no anxiety. Mr. Warfield spoke of your going back to Westchester, but he doesn't think it the best thing."

And she had written, had sent her promise.

"I don't know how to thank you;" and Helen's voice was freighted with heartfelt emotion. "That old summer—how long ago it seems—when I went to bed at night in my little cot, I used to dream out what it would be like to be your little girl and stay here always."

"I wish I had seen it in that light then. But Mrs. Van Dorn would have outbid me. And I firmly believe she meant to adopt you. Poor body! and she did love life so. Well, she had a pleasant time, and most of the things she liked. After all, it was a pretty good old age. And, now, you will think this over?"

"Oh, yes." It was safe to promise that, for she could not help thinking it over and being touched with the tender love. "There are no words to express my gratitude—"

"But you'll show it in dozens of different ways. I know you. I can trust you. It is

the living out rather than any promises in the beginning."

"I must tell you," she said presently, "that I am going away for a little visit to a school-mate, the one I have the photograph of. I spoke to father, and he gave me some money."

"I ought not grudge you that pleasure, surely. I shall not begin by being a step-mother. But you must have your clothes fixed up a little. We may have two or three quiet days. You have been so bountifully supplied, and some of the pretty things we'll make over."

Helen gave a soft sound of assent.

"I don't really know how to take your father," Mrs. Dayton began again reflectively. "I thought him a quiet, simple gentleman, and he is all that; but one doesn't seem to get any nearer to him. He appears to live in a world of his own. I don't know that we could enter into it, but he fences us out."

Helen had observed that. There were no glimpses of the inner man, unless indeed that had been trained on such severe lines that every thought not pertaining to his work had been obliterated. One could not offer him any little tenderness, and there was so much vital warmth in Helen's nature.

"I do believe I am more like Uncle Jason than any one else," she declared laughingly. "I am quite sure he could have been cultivated."

She answered Daisy's letter at once. She had a feeling that she would like to get off before her father's return.

Mrs. Dayton's ingenuity transformed some of the garments with very little expense. Last summer's skirts made pretty shirt-waists, and nothing was more serviceable than white. And Helen found time for a few calls and a visit to the Library, to Miss Westerly's delight.

"I was afraid that you had forgotten about me," she said. "Girlhood finds so much in the way of friendships."

"I was busy helping father with some work. Oh, I could not forget any one who had taken such an interest in me;" and her eyes shone with truth as well as regard.

"Your father came in here one day to find a book we did not own. What a scholar he is! But he quite demolished our little library," and Miss Westerly smiled over the recollection. "We are not up on the high intellectual round, I must admit, but we have some fine books on modern themes and discoveries, and several excellent histories. Neither have we any great scholars in the town except old Mr. Walters, and he has a fine theological library, I believe. The schoolgirls study the encyclopedias, for there you have it in a nutshell. We can't compete with the British Museum or the Bodleian Library. I think young girls do not take kindly to abstruse subjects."

That was true enough. Girls did like something that came, or was likely to come, in their own lives. And oh, there were so many splendid books coming to light all the time!

Helen found a letter from her father in the office. It was brief and difficult to decipher. He had been asked to deliver two lectures at a famous summer school, and to attend a meeting of savants at Cincinnati. Helen had better take the time for her visit, and be sure to spend some hours a day over her Greek. It might be a good thing for her and her schoolmate to improve their Latin somewhat.

Then Daisy's missive arrived, so full of joy that it touched Helen deeply. She was to get to New York and remain in the waiting room at the ferry, and when she saw a man who looked exactly like the inclosed photograph, that would be Mr. Bell.

She had answered Juliet's letter and given her the advice she craved. There was nothing on her mind, and her spirits rose accordingly.

"I shall count every one of the ten days," said Mrs. Dayton.

It was the Helen Grant of Aldred House when she was settled in the train. She had a book with her, but it was not the Greek; still she did not read any. She was too full of anticipation and speculation. The photograph was in her satchel, and this part of the journey was quite familiar. She crossed the ferry and entered the waiting room rather hesitatingly. Then a smile of relief illumined her face as a rather stout, rosy, clean-shaven man came forward.

"Miss Grant!" he exclaimed, and Helen answered cordially.

"Daisy has been so afraid something would happen and you wouldn't come. She could hardly trust me to find you. Our Daisy, as you have doubtless discovered, is a spoiled child, the baby of the flock, and it is said babies always rule the house or make a great fuss when they are not allowed to. Ours is no exception."

She liked his brown eyes that were merry

and his hearty, reassuring voice. He piloted her through the crowd, up the elevated stairway, and they were whirled along to the station in good time for the train. Mr. Bell was very courteous and yet full of amusing comments, and Helen could not help joining in the mood. They went up the side of the river, viewing the hills opposite, and he repeated odd legends that interested her very much. He was unlike any one she had ever met, and she didn't wonder that Daisy adored him. To have such a father!

Presently the station was reached. There was a two-seated surrey, the horses securely fastened. The driver had gone through the waiting room, and now Daisy stood among others to welcome friends.

"I ought to have hidden her away!" he exclaimed, "just to see your disappointment."

"You are very naughty to think of such a thing! But you couldn't have left her in the train to go on to the next station. Oh, Helen, I can hardly believe it. Now, papa, hand us in to the back seat, and you may drive."

"Daisy, you never came down alone!" and his voice had a touch of severity.

"Oh, no, no! Tom drove, and he has to go over to the Willings'. But I could drive," mischievously.

"Not these horses."

"We have an old nag, Helen, who is safe and kind, the kind that stops at the roadside and eats grass in spite of your good counsel. I am allowed to take her out for exercise, but I think I get the greater part of it. Oh, I am so glad!" And she squeezed Helen's arm.

Helen understood to what the gladness referred, and laughed in happy gratification.

"Did you recognize papa at the first glance?"

"His photograph is excellent."

"And I've described you so often that it seems as if we must have known you years. You mustn't mind if Willard teases you. He says the worst things about girl friendships. And he has two or three chums that he writes to and visits, and has photographs and mementoes of them, and I do believe he has exchanged rings with one fellow. I call the photograph of them Damon and Pythias. And we have never been taken together, if we are romantic. But the romances have happened to you."

Helen colored, and her remembrance went back to the first night at school.

Mr. Bell did not interrupt the girls' chatter, though he noted that Daisy did most of the talking. They turned away from the river, but it was up a winding ascent that looked as if the road had been cut through a forest, the trees were so large. Here and there a house with a rather rural aspect, then they were set closer together, though still with roomy grounds.

"Oh!" cried Helen, "how beautiful it is! It suggests Westchester a little."

"Over here is the town. Why didn't they build it on the river slope instead of this little plain?"

"Because, my dear," said her father, "the handsome river slope is saved for the multimillionaires, who will come up here presently and spend no end of money in castles with turrets and angles and sun parlors and observatories for the people to observe and envy as they go up and down the river. And then the town can tax these places and add to its income."

"You see, papa has an eye to the main chance, the making of money—for others. Oh,

why don't you get very rich for yourself? Then we will steal Helen and go abroad, and when Marjorie is married you may adopt her."

Helen laughed.

"This is a very old settlement, Miss Grant, and dates back to revolutionary times, has some rather notable legends. I suspect at that time they considered the advantage of the windbreak the woody ridge made to shield the houses from the cold winds of the river. And there is a pretty view over beyond that range of hills that finally joins the mountain. My people have lived here a hundred and fifty years, when this was farming land and neighbors were few."

The house was on a decided elevation, an odd old stone building with a modern wing attached, though the first story of that was stone as well. The modern air added a quaintness. There were well-kept grounds, with a wide drive all around, a spacious barn and stable at the rear. The house had a fine view of the small town, and in winter, when the leaves had fallen, one could see across to the highlands of the opposite State.

A lady sat on the porch with some dainty sewing in her hand. A sweet face, with light-

brown, wavy hair, beautiful eyes of dark blue, and a fair, soft complexion. Pretty and gentle, with a kind of yearning love, as if she longed to take all things to her heart.

"This is my dear Helen, mamma. I've told everything about you, except the things I don't know," laughing as she turned to Helen, who flushed.

"We are very glad to welcome you," Mrs. Bell said, extending her hand, and the tone itself was a welcome. It was such a tender, cultivated voice, with a lingering cadence that was like music. "I have been something of a lameter for the past three weeks, but now I am improving and can get about without a crutch. You have given Daisy a great deal of happiness, Miss Grant."

"And myself a very great pleasure. It was a disappointment to me not to accept your kind invitation of last summer," replied Helen, in an earnest tone.

"Mothers desire to know what their daughter's friends are like, and Daisy is still such a child, impulsive and susceptible to influences. Her sisters being considerably older—"

"And you wouldn't believe Helen is almost a year younger than I am, if I wasn't noted for my strict adherence to the truth. In wisdom she might be a great-grandmother."

"Oh, Daisy! I don't feel wise at all. I

often want counsel myself."

"To whom did you go in that extremity?" laughed the girl, raising her mirthful eyes.

"To Miss Aldred when I could have her. And Mrs. Dayton is my best friend at Hope. I have wished she was my mother."

"I'll let you have a little of mine when I have considered the subdivision. But now come upstairs and wash off the dust of travel and renew your beauty; your youth doesn't need it."

The hall was spacious enough for a room, having a big fireplace at one end with stone jambs and a mantel curiously carved. The winding stairs were broad, the upper hall a sort of oval, with five doorways opening on it.

"We girls are over on this side. You are to have Marjorie's room, but you are to spend most of the time in mine, except when you are asleep. Here is a closet for your things, and —oh, there comes your trunk! But it is such a tiny little one."

"Mrs. Dayton lent it to me. I thought the

school trunk too big."

"You are surely going back?"

"I expect to," in a confident tone.

"Oh, I am just crazy to hear all about your father. Wasn't it a stunning surprise! That isn't slang when properly used, and no other adjective expresses it."

Helen refreshed herself while they chatted, but the *all* was not very much, though Daisy insisted it was romantic to the last degree. And they loitered so that they were hardly ready when the dinner bell rang.

CHAPTER V

DAYS OF GLADNESS

HELEN would have hardly called it the æsthetic side of her nature that was so pleased and satisfied as she entered the dining room with Daisy's arm about her. She bowed when her friend said: "This is my brother Willard," and a bright young fellow with brown eyes like his father, curly, chestnut hair, and a very much sunburned face, bowed in return and said, "I must add my welcome to the others', Miss Grant. I am pleased to meet you."

Mrs. Bell, in a dainty white gown, sat at the head of the table, serene and gracious. Mr. Bell was opposite. Willard seated himself on one side, the girls on the other. There was a wide fireplace here, too, some oak wainscoting, a carved china closet, and buffet. The ceiling had small oak beams, the coloring between very light, and this tint was reproduced in the side walls. There were panels with pictures painted in, flowers, one of pussy

willow branches, one of magnificent autumn leaves, another of grapes and leaves, and one of delicious fruit. It seemed like going into a garden. There was nothing glaring, no jumble, nothing for mere show even in the table appointments, but a kind of harmonious beauty that touched Helen's very soul.

"How did the regatta go?" Mr. Bell asked of his son, glancing at him rather humor-

ously.

"Nothing to brag of, really," answered Willard, with a touch of boyish contempt. "We beat, as I knew we should. The Tritons came in second, and, your majesty, there was no third;" with a sort of mock bow to his father.

"Why, what was the matter?"

"Laziness and lack of training. The Tritons thought if they had Vanderveer they could beat anything. We have been up early in the morning rowing our very best and keeping dark about it," laughing gayly.

"This was only a test," subjoined his father.

"Are you entered for the race at Collins'
Point?"

Willard would have enjoyed saying "You bet," but he had been trained to a fine respect

for his father, even if his answer did have a touch of self-glorification.

"Did you ever see a boat race, or a yacht race?" asked Mr. Bell, turning to Helen.

"I am a country girl, and there are no rivers of account at any of the Hopes," Helen answered, with a mirthful light in her eyes. "Westchester is the only place I know about, except that I once spent a few days in New York, mostly devoted to shopping. I had one drive about Central Park, and went to one matinée."

"That's very well done," returned Mr. Bell smilingly. "Now, Daisy, we know where we stand. We shall not bore her with places she knows all by heart. Willard, you must take them out for a row, or get up a race. And—let me see—there is West Point. Are you interested in the training of the brave defenders of our country?"

"I am afraid I am diffusive," replied Helen, with a glint of humor. "I like so many things, and there are so many I long to see. I am afraid I shall not get through half of them unless the span of life is extended in my case, and I have some means of renewing my youth.

But I mean to enjoy all that come in my way, and be grateful for them."

"That is the true spirit," Mr. Bell nodded approvingly. "Then suppose we take West Point. Could you go some day, Willard? And you, mother?"

"No, I would not venture. I should only be a drawback, or else I should have to sit still, and I have had numberless visits there."

"Why, I'd like it immensely!" exclaimed Willard. "Let me see. I could go Friday or next week. And I know some of the boys there."

"And Newburgh is an old historical place. There's Irvington, and Sleepy Hollow, and many points of interest."

"I shall drive her around to-morrow," declared Daisy. "We have so many things to talk over. Oh, you needn't laugh!" to Willard.

Helen glanced up and caught the vague reflection.

"Girls are very much interested in what is happening to other girls," she interposed. "And when there is a school full of them all with various stories, and no baseball or football club to distract your attention, you pay more regard to them."

"Didn't you have basket ball? That's one of the new games."

"Mrs. Aldred did not approve of it."

"I liked Aldred House because some of those rough things were fenced out," said Mrs. Bell.

"As if girls did not need to be strong and healthy," commented the young man rather ironically.

"There are many other exercises that conserve health; and your great athletes are not long-lived. Miss Grant wants to live many decades, she has so much to see and to do, so don't give her bad advice, Willard;" and his father smiled humorously.

"Miss Grant looks as if she could run a race. Did you ever try?"

"When I was little, yes. I ran and climbed and swung from limbs of trees and jumped ditches, and suddenly some one put me to study and opened such a splendid world before me that the other things lost their charm. I believe I do not want to be an athletic girl, though I do hope to keep well."

"Girls' lives are quite distinct from that of

boys, I always maintain," said the mother gently. "And I see no need of a girl's life being so ordered that she makes a nervous, fretful woman, self-willed, and with no self-control."

"Mother has three points against you, Willard," said his father good-humoredly, "and Daisy suggests that we shall adopt Miss Grant. That will be four."

"Miss Grant, come over to my side and insist that it was the running and jumping and climbing that gave you such a fine physique. And what about your ancestors for temperament? We go back several generations nowadays for our virtues and our vices."

Helen flushed vividly, thinking of her mother and her father and the Mulford clan at Hope.

"I don't see why you can't have some ideas and aims of your own!" she exclaimed almost resentfully. "Purposes, too, good, strong ones, when you see qualities in others that you admire, and a course that attracts you, rouses your ambition—counsel that is elevating, even if it comes from a stranger. If you do not like what your ancestors did, *must* you follow it? Can you not take some other course?"

"Bravo, Miss Grant!" and Mr. Bell laughed heartily. "I can't believe it wisdom to lay your weakness and inefficiency on the generations that have gone before when you make no effort to overcome them. We have had some noble examples of this, and why not strive to emulate them instead of dropping down supinely. You can't choose your ancestors, necessary as good Dr. Holmes thought it, and, as some one says, you can't choose your life, but you can choose the way of living it."

"Oh, what a splendid quotation!" she subjoined eagerly. "I must remember that. It would be a tonic in times of depression."

"Surely you don't get the blues!" Willard laughed now, and raised his eyes with a teasing light.

"I've been too busy to get much of anything but—but lessons."

"And she's just a splendid scholar! She never lets go of anything until she has made it a secure prisoner in her brain," appended Daisy. "But what shall we do to-morrow? You won't want us in the city?" to her father.

"Saturday will be better. There will be the concert in the park."

[&]quot;Then to-morrow we will drive about."

"The Conklins are coming to dinner, though there are no young people among them. But they are very fond of young people," said Mrs. Bell.

"And, Helen, you must sing for them."

Willard glanced up. He decided Helen Grant must be quite worth knowing and perhaps teasing. She flushed so readily and seemed so spirited.

The dessert came in. The maid who waited upon the table seemed a part of the house, she was so harmonious in her soft, gray gown and white apron, and so deft in her movements.

Helen recalled the evening she had first taken dinner at Mrs. Dayton's, and how everything had pleased her. There was more real elegance here, and Mrs. Bell suggested Mrs. Aldred a little. She *did* enjoy beautiful surroundings and refinement.

Afterward they went out on the porch. Willard bethought himself of an errand in the village. The conversation was on the beautiful night, and Mr. Bell repeated some stanzas of a poem.

"I am rather romantic, you will find," and he smiled over to Helen. "Jessica and Lorenzo didn't keep it all, you see. Other stories besides theirs began 'On such a night.'"

"It's the beautiful thing in the 'Merchant of Venice,'" declared Helen enthusiastically.

"But to think of that miserable old Jew being Jessica's father!" exclaimed Daisy. "Now *she* didn't inherit his meannesses!"

"Perhaps they did not consider heredity in those days, but the Jews keep plenty of it. And that is poetry, of the finest sort, too."

"Do you think there is any really fine poetry now—since then?"

Helen asked it a little confusedly.

- "Oh, Miss Grant, don't get discouraged about your own times. Read dear old Whittier and he will help you to preserve an equilibrium.
 - "' That all the best the world has had Remains to make our own life glad. Our common daily life divine, And every land a Palestine."
- "I am not discouraged. I like modern things. And I think beautiful little poems are scattered all along the way. Only I heard some one say there was nothing worth reading

since Homer. There was hardly an exception made in Shakespeare's favor. I don't like to think so," protestingly.

Then she felt a little conscience-smitten to think she had said it.

"I sometimes wonder how we should feel if there was some comparison, if there had been a dozen or two fine poets at the same time. But Homer stands alone and is unsurpassed, unless by and by we unearth some old tablet or document that proves there were a dozen writers who joined forces. I hope we never shall. It is true we have had no really great, long poem since Paradise Lost, but many poets have done good work. Perhaps if scholars were not compelled to take a hack at the Iliad, in time we might forget that. Every now and then I come across a little poem-three or four verses-that I think would have made one's fame in Wordsworth's time, verses that sing themselves into one's very soul, that give comfort and courage. All along there have been poets, but sometimes it is like a flock of birds singing songs in the morning from very gladness. You can't single one out, but you remember the divine melody."

"Oh, I am so glad some one feels that way,"

she said with a kind of tender passion, as if her inmost soul came with it.

"I'm very fond of the Iliad. And I'm fond of Tennyson. 'In Memoriam' seems as if it had been written for me. I had a very dear cousin who died away from home a little while before his wedding day. And there are poems of Longfellow that I cherish. So you see I am modern as well as romantic."

She had known so few men that she felt suddenly drawn to him. If she had no one—and the Bells really wanted her! Oh, what a foolish, impossible dream!

They left poetry and began to talk of plans and happenings. There had been a letter from Annis. Both girls were staying awhile at Lake George. Mrs. Towne, the mother of Annis' lover, had a cottage there, and she had insistently invited them. Gerald Towne had just come up on his vacation. They were going to take some little tours around.

There was such a delightful atmosphere all about, different from school, of course, different from Mrs. Dayton's, unlike anything Helen had ever known before. She came near to envying Daisy when she slipped around, and somehow, just as a roseleaf might drop, seem-

ing to fall into her father's arms from the arm of the chair on which she had been reclining.

"This is the baby of the household," he said to Helen with a laugh. "We are not going to let her grow up until there are grandchildren."

Was it a dream, Helen wondered the next morning. No. Here was a lovely room with nothing extravagant in it, only the breath of refined living. The pictures held some special beauty. There was a modern desk and bookcase in one, in French maple. Two shelves above held some pretty bric-à-brac. The willow chairs were suggestive of a charming young woman, but Marjorie had not begun to have a story yet. There was a bit of blue here and there, a couch piled up with cushions, the brass bedstead had a canopy of lace, the spread was lace over blue silk. Daisy's room had pink garnishings.

Some time, when she was teaching school and had earned some money, she would have a lovely room where she could sit and dream when the day's work was over.

Something flashed in the room, on the bed, and two arms almost smothered her.

"I was afraid when I woke up that it was all a dream!" cried Daisy.

"And I wondered, too," was the rejoinder, then they both laughed. "I've slept beyond everything."

"Mamma told me not to wake you, that

you might be tired-"

"Tired!" She shook the curling ends of hair out of her eyes.

"I'm glad you are not an athletic girl. Mamma doesn't like them. And I never could be one. You see, I was a rather delicate child. But you impress me as having so much strength. You did at first. I like to lean on people. Come, get dressed, papa will have to take his train soon."

The breakfast had the same tone of simple elegance as the dinner last night. The service had an air of daintiness, the serving was perfect, with a leisurely aspect of comfort, enjoyment.

Willard was going down to the city with his father. The ladies went out on the porch afterward, the girls talking school, and pleasantly discussing various mates, wondering about the new scholars, and if they would like Mrs. Wiley and her daughter.

Helen never remembered just what led to it, but she found herself explaining about Mrs. Van Dorn and telling the story of how she had gone over to Hope to be a sort of half-companion and waiting-maid, and how it had all come about when Mrs. Van Dorn found she had such a longing for education. If Mrs. Van Dorn could have looked down from whatever country she was in, she would have been amazed at the colors this grateful heart sketched her in.

It was so frankly told, with no pretense, that it won Mrs. Bell's admiration.

"I've never heard half of this before," complained Daisy, feeling in her half-jealous fashion as if she had been defrauded of a confidence.

"I think Mrs. Van Dorn preferred not to have much said about it. You know, you can sometimes understand what a person wants without a real explanation. But I never could have guessed about the going abroad——"

Helen's voice broke a little and her eyes were dewy with tears, her whole face alight with gratitude.

"Oh, what a pity! And suppose you had stumbled over Roxy Mays somewhere—wouldn't she have been surprised?"

Mrs. Bell wondered at Helen's fortitude and

resignation. To come so near a great delight, to be so dear to some one, and then have this sad ending!

"And then your father came home," continued Daisy eagerly, as if the story must go on.

"He is a great scholar, and he thinks me quite an ignoramus," returned Helen, flushing with a little embarrassment. "He has been several years in the East, among the old ruins. He knows all about the old nations, even before Babylon was builded, but he doesn't know much about girls, or their ways and wants. But he is going back again—"

Mrs. Bell divined that there was something over which Helen did not feel quite comfortable, so she gently turned the talk by asking about their drive.

"Oh, let us go now!" cried Daisy. "It will be very pleasant for the next hour or two, better than starting out after lunch. I'll tell Tony to harness up Vic."

She had been named Vixen in her early days because she came of a strain on one side that was considered rather high-headed. Marjorie, whose pet she had been, called her Vic. She was very gentle and trustworthy, and did

not resent being put to the plow even, but was excused from real work.

The phaeton was low and comfortable. Daisy was a good driver. And oh, how enchanting the world seemed to Helen Grant that morning! There were hills and valleys, there was a pretty lake where some people were tenting, and then they drove over to the beautiful Hudson and surveyed it up and down, and were home late to lunch, but no one found any fault and Catherine was obliging.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAND OF THE AFTERNOON

THE Conklins were an elderly mother, a single middle-aged daughter, and a widowed daughter-in-law, who lived together and agreed, who were quiet, amiable people, and one of the great treats was to visit the Bells now and then. They always came early and brought their work. Mrs. Conklin knitted dainty counterpanes, generally sold in shares at fairs; Miss Conklin did needle-work, and the daughter-in-law seemed always hemming ruffles.

They were fond of music, and Daisy played while Helen sang all the songs she knew, Daisy joining in some. Then they displayed new photographs, and Helen read an amusing story out of a magazine.

Daisy ran out to the drive when she saw her father coming. Helen stood on the porch. She was as glad to see him as if he had been a friend of years; indeed he seemed like one.

He smiled and showed Daisy some item in the paper he held folded in his hand. She appeared amazed, and glanced at Helen so sharply that the girl flushed scarlet.

"Oh, you naughty keeper of secrets! And you never said a word about it. You are the queerest girl! Why, I should have perched myself upon a pinnacle!"

"And flapped your wings and cried aloud," laughed her father. "I dare say Miss Grant was waiting to see how this erudition would be received by the world at large. Now cast your eye over this."

Helen did, and the surprise was visible in her face. Professor Addison Grant had delivered a lecture before the great literary circle at the summer school where clergymen, authors, and savants congregated—a large and intelligent audience—on the recent wonderful discoveries that had been made by reading the tablets and impressions of rock inscriptions that told the stories of a world before the time of Noah and traditions that had been preserved of the flood, of contemporaries of Abraham and Lot, of the great king Kudur Lagamer, the Chedorlaomer of the Bible, and back to Nimrod, the founder of an empire, and

Urukh, the builder of temples. How the audience had listened spellbound as to some tale of romance, though Professor Grant was not what might be called an enthusiastic speaker. He had lived so long among these marvels that they had become plain history to him.

There was to be another lecture on Assyria and Babylonia which would no doubt call together a still larger audience.

"You take it very coolly!" exclaimed Mr. Bell. "Why, Daisy, we feel quite honored by having the daughter of Professor Grant as our guest, don't we? I shall have to put it in the Society Column," with a mirthful twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, please don't," she implored. "I think father would not like it."

"My child," he said reassuringly, "I should not like the pretentiousness myself. But the article is very complimentary to your father."

She was pleased and secretly proud. She knew so little about him that she could not gauge any standing he might have in the intellectual world. Indeed, these things seemed so far-fetched to her, so unlike the realities of to-day, the narrow experience of sixteen years.

Willard did not come home; he was to spend

the night with a college chum and meet them the next morning, take them up to the park, where his father would join them in time for luncheon. After the guests were gone they had a pleasant chat, and Helen went to bed full of a strange content. Everything was so delightful. There was no miss in the plans.

"We had better take a drive around!" exclaimed Willard. "Father will enjoy the museum and the art gallery with you, and we must not miss the music. We can stop at some of the important points."

Oh, how beautiful everything was! To be sure, there had been the hanging gardens of Babylon, but they were for the few,—the homesick queen, if the legend was true,—and what had the thousands of captives and exiles? And here were throngs of happy, joyous people, groups of children in the merriest of moods, running, shouting, full of glee. Handsome equipages, handsome women in gala attire, horseback riders, and the horses themselves looked proud of their burdens. Waving trees, knolls of shrubbery, shady nooks, long stretches of green sward, the lake, with the dainty boats, the swans and ducks, the splendid

bridges, the great buildings where so many treasures were housed, and Helen gave a long, long breath.

"What was that sigh for, Miss Grant?" asked Willard.

"Did I sigh? I think it was the overflow of delight. So many beautiful things, so many happy people. I am glad to see people happy. It seems a great misfortune not to be able to enjoy to the full."

"But when you have seen everything a great many times, and it gets to be an old story?"

"It ought not get to be an old story, because there are continual changes. Think how this must look in the glory of autumn, and then again in winter, with fields of snow and the lakes merry with skaters. And when the trees begin to bud. The soft swelling, the delicate pinks and grays, and curious dull greens and buds and blossoms and leafing out. Why, it is all wonderful and full of such mysterious changes that it piques one's curiosity to know what will come next."

Her eyes were alight with a fascinating interest as she turned them to Willard, and yet the expression of her face, earnest as it was, held a girlish simplicity. He thought of the use some girls would make of it to win admiration. And it seemed just now as if Daisy's trivial talk jarred.

They came around to the Casino presently and dismissed the carriage, walking up and down until they espied Mr. Bell. And then a chum of Willard's hailed him. Mr. Bell and Daisy had seen him before. Indeed, he had been a guest at Oakdale.

"My friend Mr. Grandon," said Willard to Helen.

"Come and have some luncheon with us!" exclaimed Mr. Bell. "And we will hear what these young people have been about all the morning."

Mr. Grandon looked uncertain an instant, then Mr. Bell's smile assured him, and he turned with them. There was something genial and convincing in the courtesy, and it did not need to be repeated.

They had a really jolly time, with bits of gayety and several amusing incidents that led to bright, pleasant interchange of ideas, at times almost trenching upon wit. Daisy brought out a pretty brightness, and quite fascinated Helen.

"We shall not have much time for all the grand things, the sculptures and treasures and—"

"Mummies," interposed Daisy. "Helen has never seen one, though I dare say your father is familiar with them."

"We have two or three in the college, haven't we, Will? All the juice seems to have dried out of them, and they are just ready to be packed away in linen and spices. But no one has the courage to propose it. And you sometimes meet withered up old people in the street who would make excellent mummies."

"We might lay them away and two or three thousand years hence be as famous as Egypt. I sometimes wonder what nation will come and sweep us out of existence, and gloat over the ruins."

"Oh, you do not think—" And Helen turned such a horrified face to Willard that

they all laughed.

"It has been the history of many nations," said Grandon; "perhaps more than we really know of. But I think we are good for a few hundred years yet."

The mummy case quite disappointed Helen, and she felt sorry for the poor exile in a strange country, a mere object of curiosity. But there were all the sculptures that the two young men seemed to know so much about, with their knowledge of Greek, and she had not yet looked into her book.

"We ought to have a whole day for each department," Mr. Bell said to Helen. "We can only take a glimpse of some of the most famous pictures, for we must hear a little music, and the sight of the throng will interest you very much. It is truly a holiday sight, and all the music some poor souls get."

"Except the hand-organ," suggested Willard.

Helen thought she could stay all the remainder of the afternoon with the paintings. Mr. Bell did not hurry her from one to the other, "For you may have other opportunities to see them," he said. And so they lingered while he repeated the history or legend of those that he saw interested her, and to whom the museum was indebted for this or that gift and collection.

"These are the pleasures that go down through generations and gratify hundreds of people who could never go abroad to see them. And, even if one isn't up to the high point of artistic cultivation, there are many things they can and do enjoy."

The gallery suggested Mrs. Van Dorn to her, and she was curiously glad that her kind friend had derived so much pleasure and given out so much in return from the use of her money.

But the crowd assembled about the music stand was wonderful, and what went to Helen's heart was the comfortable way in which they were taking their delight. The soft grass was free; they were stretched out on it. There were little circles of friends chatting softly, keeping time, nodding to each other at some familiar strain; all nations it seemed to Helen. Intense faces, joyous ones, some that had not let quite all the care drop out of the lines graven with toil and anxiety.

They said good-bye to Mr. Grandon, who promised to come up some evening during the week.

"I'm just tired to death!" declared Daisy, and she glanced imploringly at her father.

He had meant to finish or at least continue a talk with Helen, but he smiled and motioned Willard in the seat with her and placed Daisy by the window and himself as her guard.

There was such a sense of protection in his smile, the true-heart kindliness that was always on the alert with no effusiveness.

"Are you comfortable now?" he asked.

"I'm so warm. It's stifling coming out of the air. Willard, my fan is in your pocket."

She did look worn out, yet an hour ago she had been so gay, with the laughing and bantering back and forth.

Her father fanned her. No, she did not want any ice-water to drink, but she wished she had a bag of cracked ice on her head. "Take off my gloves, they look as if I had been measuring gravel in them. And I want to lean down on your shoulder."

He pulled off the gloves and he took her hat, settling her gently and saying, "Poor little girl," with his comforting smile. Helen had not seen such fatherhood, had not even dreamed of it, though she had imagined what mothers could be like, but this gentleness with the pettish girl almost brought tears to her eyes.

Willard glanced at her, studied her a bit, which she did not observe. She was full of pink tints from the heat, but somehow they were not unbecoming. There was such a pretty softness in her eyes, and a grace in the relaxed shoulders.

"Have you had a nice day?" he asked.

"I should like to say that it has been simply a glorious day, but that may sound girlishly exuberant. I have been full to the brim of enjoyment."

"Well, why shouldn't you be girlish? I think some of the real delight must vanish when you begin to be young women. There's so much—fussiness."

That wasn't quite what he meant. He had noted that Helen Grant had not made one effort to attract Dick Grandon, nor himself, for that matter. And she had been so simply happy, so interested with his father.

As they left the city behind them the air began to cool off. The west was in the afterglow of sunset, and they caught frequent glimpses of it. Helen was not in a mood for talking, but her face kept an intense sort of interest, as if the sights and events of the day were not ready to be dismissed.

The late dinner was just the kind of repast for weary travelers. Daisy had the reclining chair brought out on the porch, and her father arranged the cushions. Helen was over by Mrs. Bell, who was much interested by her vivid descriptions of the various enjoyments. Willard sat on the step and wished Daisy would not interrupt by comments that seemed to jar a little. The fresh, eager voice had so much strength in it, yet it had no hard or dominant notes. It was seldom you heard just such an inspiriting voice. And she did not seem a bit tired.

Sunday was restful and yet very cheerful. The Bells were religious in the higher sense, and Sunday was a true feast day with them, a day to give thanks and rest from labor, to draw nearer the King in his beauty and the great unseen. No such influence had ever come in Helen's life before. No one had ever brought the infinite grace of God so near and rested in it with that supreme satisfaction.

The girls and Willard sang most of the evening. The worldly matters were laid by.

But Monday morning there were some discussions.

"I think I can get off Tuesday, and we had better devote the day to West Point. Willard, suppose you take the girls to Newburgh to-day and run over some historical points. We can go to Irvington in half a day."

"Why, yes," assented Willard, much pleased.

So that day was full of interest, and West Point was quite a revelation. Helen had read descriptions of it, but none of them came up to the reality. The great hills and bluff, the river winding in and out, the fine buildings, the walks full of excursionists, stylish young girls under the shadow of daintiest summer parasols, and attendant officers and cadets. Mr. Bell hunted up one of the colonels, who was a distant connection, and Willard found several friends. Suddenly there was an unmusical shrilling of a drum corps.

"That isn't a signal for war, though it is for an attack," said young Wadsworth, their guide, laughingly, as Helen gave a start and flushed scarlet. "The cadets are going to dinner."

Companies seemed to rise from everywhere, marched along by cadet captains. Subalterns in chevrons and stripes, second and third classmen in dazzling whiteness, with erect heads and steps with the precision of a machine, passed them.

"It is magnificent!" cried Daisy. "One never tires of seeing it."

"How many times have you seen it?" asked Wadsworth with a smile.

"Let me see—twice last summer, and I think two or three times before."

"If you should stay a month it would be an old story. Can you stay to see the parade at six? That will be worth while."

"Six," repeated Mr. Bell thoughtfully. "And there is a train at seven. Of course we could not take the boat back, but we have had one sail."

"Oh, stay, stay!" entreated Daisy.

"I do not think mother will be worried-"

"There are two of us to ward off dangers," said Willard. "And the parade is the big thing. Many of the excursionists will be gone by that time, and we shall have more room."

There were so many places to see that Helen was bewildered. Barracks, the library, the distant line of tents, the great avenues and stately trees, and the throngs of people. Wadsworth, having an hour or two on his hands, devoted it to Daisy. Willard met a company of city friends, two young collegians among them, so Mr. Bell had Helen to himself and went around explaining matters to her. From

Albany down there was a series of historical incidents. Right here Arnold had covenanted to hand West Point, one of the strongholds, over to the English, and then flying for his life. Down below, a short distance, Mrs. Arnold and her baby were waiting for him, she to be shocked by the news that he was ready to betray his country. And farther down André met with a shameful death for the perjury. Battles here and there, troops suffering cold and want, yet going on with indomitable courage. How stirring it was. And her guide made everything seem so real, as if he had been in it all. There was a curious charm about him, just as there had been about Mrs. Van Dorn. She was very glad he was Daisy's father, some one she could like for years to come.

"See here!" exclaimed the gay, girlish voice. "Mr. Wadsworth wants to take us to a cadet tea. I mean—" and she glanced at her father.

"That, I suppose, is for very young people," said Mr. Bell smilingly. "So, Miss Grant, you run on with them, and then, Willard, bring them to the library. I want a little talk with my old friend John De Vaux."

Willard took Helen. There was a band discoursing gay music, white-legged cadets and pretty society girls, everybody laughing, chatting, and chaffing, making engagements for to-morrow, cups of tea with a circle of lemon floating on the top, young fellows in glittering buttons and buckles handing dainty dishes of cut sugar or dropping in two or three lumps in spite of protestations, bonbons, tiny bits of sandwiches, and a most fascinating crowd.

Then the parade with the military ceremonies and evolutions, the gold buttons, chevrons, and sashes, and the fine-looking officers, was certainly worth seeing. But after that they had to hurry off to catch their train.

"Oh, Will, why didn't you decide to go to West Point!" cried Daisy. "I think it's magnificent! And there's the graduation ball. I should so like to go to one."

"Perhaps Wadsworth can get you a chance. I know several other fellows. Miss Grant, are you smitten with the military fever and ready to offer me up on the altar?"

"Surely not against your will," returned Helen, with amusement in her tone.

"I do not believe I have the making of a soldier lad in me," Willard commented.

"Well, they are just splendid, anyhow!"

"Peace has her victories as well as war. Not original," laughed Willard.

"There are many hardships in the life, and one must have a love for it to find any real satisfaction in it. It is not all dress parade," said Mr. Bell gravely.

Daisy was very tired the next morning, and when she planned for a good, long drive over the range of hills her mother gently vetoed the project. Besides, the clouds looked a little threatening.

"Then I am going to lie in the hammock, and Helen, you shall read verses to me. You may come, Will, if you want to hear her, and, mamma, you will be charmed. You will forget to sew."

An answering smile crossed the sweet face.

Helen stopped and straightened herself, though no one but Willard noticed the gesture.

"I am afraid I ought not indulge in the pleasure. I thought I ought not to take the drive. I—I have some studying to do," hesitatingly.

"Oh, nonsense! It is vacation time. Even the birds know that. Are you afraid you will not meet Mrs. Wiley's expectations?" "It has nothing to do with Aldred House, or anything I am likely to teach. My father asked it of me."

"I see his second lecture was very enthusiastically received," announced Willard.

"Oh, is it something about ruins?" asked Daisy impatiently, annoyance settling about her sweet mouth.

"No. I'm not sure but ruins would seem more inspiriting to me. Girls do master it, though."

"Is it worse than Latin or French?"

"Well—I thought they were dreadful at first. I am afraid I was not born for a linguist. It's Greek, and I think I understand about things being Greek to people," and Helen gave a lugubrious smile.

"Are you fitting for college?" inquired Willard.

"I do hope to go, and that braces me up a little. But father thinks Greek necessary to any education."

"How far have you gone?" he inquired.

"Oh, I haven't gone at all. I am fast in the slough of despond. And I dare say I have forgotten the beginning. It was only a few days, but he told me to go on." "He must have had a high opinion of your capabilities. Will you let me see your book?"

Helen went for it. Willard amused himself playing with the collie's soft ears. "Professor Grant must be a queer dick!" he exclaimed.

"My son," interposed the gentle voice.

Helen returned with a flushed face, and held out to the young man a well-worn book.

"Of all things!" was the ejaculation.
"Why, this is a second-year book and a tougher!"

"The explanations are in the first few pages. And he taught me the letters."

"It's a sin to start any one this way. Now, I'll show you," and he bounded off.

"I don't see why you have to learn Greek!" said Daisy in a complaining tone. "And this visit is mine."

There was a little of the old jealous love in the tone. Every day Helen was expecting to hear her ask about Juliet Craven, but she had not.

Willard came back with two books that had lost their covers, and looked almost disreputable.

"Oh, if you don't mind, sit here on the step, on this cushion," and the young fellow settled it for her. "Mother, do I look stern enough for a tutor? See how I can frown."

"I don't really know anything," protestingly.

"We will begin at the foundation. Greek made easy. Conversation in half a dozen lessons—but in English. Let me hear the letters first, so that I can know what you are about."

Helen's face was scarlet. "Willard, don't tease her," interposed his mother.

The young man began to explain marks and accents and various aids, just as if he might be in a class at school. Helen took courage after a little. There were a few things she could understand, but in fifteen minutes she began to think it too easy, for it really did interest her.

"Why, I do believe I could learn it myself," said Daisy, getting quite accustomed to the sound.

Willard was in real earnest, and enjoyed the eagerness of his pupil and the sensible manner in which she took her blunders. Daisy fell asleep. The soft mother voice said, "Don't tire out Miss Helen."

The girl looked up and smiled. "That sounded so delightful. I wish you felt like

calling me Helen always. But I am not tired at all, only——" and she glanced at her teacher.

"Oh, I'm glad of doing something useful. How do I know but I may decide to be a professor myself?"

This year he was to make his choice.

"I think you have done enough. And there is the luncheon bell. Wake up, little Daisy. Have you been wandering in the isles where Sappho loved and sang, lulled by our melodious voices? See, the sun is struggling through, and we can take our drive this afternoon."

The bright, frank, joyous face was good to look at, it was so little self-conscious.

"I don't know how to thank you," Helen said.

"We will try it again to-morrow morning. Work before pleasure."

They had a delightful drive around country ways, and all the evening they talked over West Point. The next morning Daisy heard a party were coming up to play lawn tennis, and she went down to the village to invite several more. Mr. Grandon surprised them by appearing quite early in the afternoon, and

they had a merry time. Helen was a big girl among them, frank and innocent of the little, dainty, guileful ways used by most of them to attract and hold. The honesty and uprightness drew her very close to the mother's heart. And the sweet motherliness touched Helen like a strain of exquisite music. There was a mysterious repose about it, nothing put on for a guest, but a simple, everyday using, a grace of life that had grown in the beginning with husband, with child, and now was ingrained.

Mrs. Dayton did not have it, kind as she was. But then she had never been any one's mother, and her husband had been dead so long, leaving behind a consciousness that she had done her whole duty, and had a right to feel comfortable over it. Helen experienced a twinge of conscience as she compared them. Mrs. Dayton had to plan and work and earn money, yet out of her generous heart she had proffered a home. And here everything seemed to come by a fine, natural right, the soft, sympathetic voice, the encouraging smile, the readiness to listen to projects and "wonders" that young people have when they outgrow the childish "whys." Willard said in a rather triumphant manner: "Doesn't she improve, mother? I don't wonder they thought her a good scholar at Aldred House."

"How do you know that?" Helen glanced up archly. "I was very slow about some things until I was fairly started."

"That's the point. You don't fly off at a tangent. You don't catch at the little smattering and think you know it all, when you don't understand it. And when you fairly get it, it is all there."

"Oh, dear! If I did forget I should want to throw it up," in a vehement fashion.

"No, I don't believe you would. You have a good deal of persistency."

At first she had felt strange and embarrassed, and half wished she could have the lesson alone, but she had grown very fond of
the approval in Mrs. Bell's lovely eyes, and
liked to have her smile when she made a blunder. She liked to sit by her and talk. It was
often about Mrs. Van Dorn, and the girl's
grateful remembrances gave an insight into
her character that was very pleasing. Mrs.
Bell wondered more than once what the father
could be like, and admired the delicacy with
which she touched upon his long absence, and
she could gather from what was not told that

there was a pain of unanswered longing in the girl's heart.

Each day had a new pleasure, but Helen thought the Saturday afternoon they went to Irvington and, taking a carriage, drove around to the places immortalized by the quaint, delicious humor of one of the charming authors of his day, paused at the simple graveyard, and stopped at the old-time house, where it seemed as if the genial spirit must still linger, was the crowning point of all. Mr. Bell was such a charming expositor.

CHAPTER VII

BETWEEN DUTY AND DESIRE

HELEN was sitting under the great sycamore tree with a book of modern poems in her hand. Some of them were so sweet she read them over and over again to make them hers. Oh, what books she would have when she could earn money of her own and have a little place, if it was only two rooms. But there should be some one to listen.

Daisy had gone on a day excursion that had been planned early in vacation. She really wanted to go, though of course she could decline.

"And you are sure you won't feel a bit hurt?" she said to Helen. "It seems mean to go off and leave you."

"Your mother thought it right," with a cordial smile. "And it would be ungenerous to want a friend every moment of the time when there were so many other things to enjoy."

"I'd like some one to want me every mo-

ment. Well, when I have a lover I suppose he will, so I must be content until then. But do you know if you were staying with that Craven girl I should be awfully jealous."

Helen laughed good-humoredly.

"It's strange you didn't hear from her! Schoolgirls' friendships presuppose lots of letters. I wonder what kind of a letter she would write?"

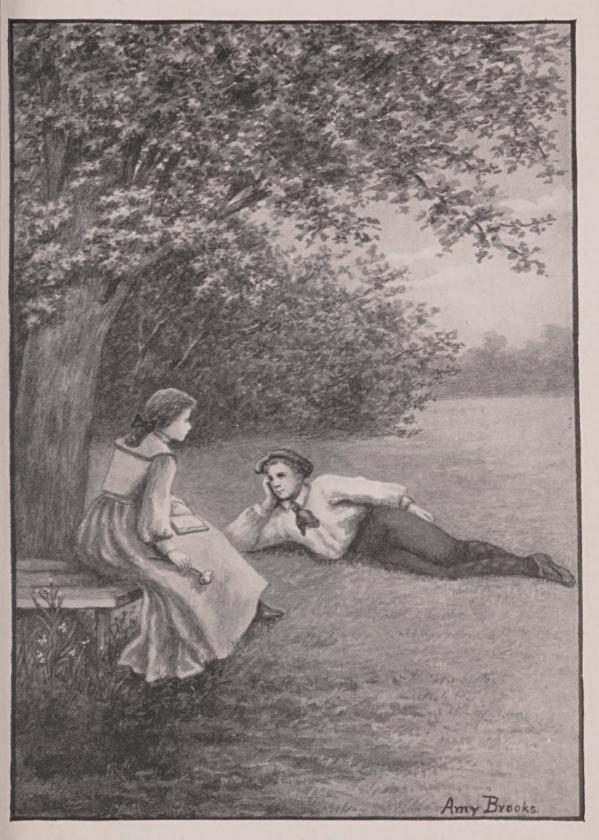
"I did hear. She was much troubled about a decision. Mrs. Davis wanted her to go abroad for a year."

"That would be just the thing for her. I hope you advised her to."

"Daisy! Daisy!" cried Willard, "here is the carriage, and the other two are on the high road. Promptness is a virtue. A moment lost——"

"Oh, you wise old saw, take it to yourself sometimes! I'm coming. Have a nice day and study Greek until your brain whirls!"

Helen was glad not to answer. There was Greek and luncheon. Willard went down to the village to match some embroidery silk; Mrs. Bell went to take her daily rest, and Helen sauntered out with her book. It was so beautiful here. The fragrant summer wind



"What are you reading?" he asked lazily. — Page 127.



brought the aroma of ripening fruit, the odors of grass from some freshly-cut lawns. The hills all about lying in sunshine and shadow, sharply defined, the village spread out in peaceful restfulness, great groups of tall hollyhocks, and a row here and there of yellow sunflowers that rightly claimed kindred with the sun, while over all was the wide horizon, an inverted sea with white fleets sailing about. Were they bound for some islands of the blest? Or was it the depth and width and glory of heaven? Somehow heaven was growing a tangible thing in these days of delight.

Willard came slowly along and nodded to her, then threw himself on the sweet-smelling grass.

"What are you reading?" he asked lazily.

- "A little book of poems that lay on the library table, 'A Handful of Lavender.' And it's odd, but I do not think I ever saw lavender growing except in your mother's garden bed, where all sweet herbs are growing—and rosemary."
 - "And rue?" with an up-look.
 - "I haven't hunted for that."
 - "Is it too suggestive of Ophelia?"
- "I have not gone deeply into the meaning

of many things. Is that a sign that I am superficial?"

"No, I don't think you are superficial. What do you mean to do with yourself? I am interested to know. You are the sort of girl who has plans."

"I had a plan of going to college. I don't know how I was to get there. Life is more difficult every year that you grow older."

"But if your friend had lived?" raising his eyes, though he was still pulling the spur from false foxglove.

"I think now she would not have wanted me to go to college."

"You took your loss heroically. You are different from most girls. I heard you talking to mother the other evening, and you never seemed to care about the money. I do not believe in all her life she had as disinterested a love."

"Why, I never thought much about the money. She did all that she promised to do, and that was splendid. It put me in a new life and gave me many new ideas. All the rest would have been grand, but it seems now that wasn't meant for me. And if things are not

really meant for you I believe they will not come your way. This did not."

"Isn't that a sort of fatalism? Wouldn't it keep one from trying to achieve many things?"

"I mean things of this kind that are so plain. I like to think over the pleasant times and wonder what her plans really were. Would I be happier if I were continually regretting? It would seem rather ungrateful to me. Only "—and her voice faltered a little—"I would rather have kept her in my life than to have gone to Europe, delightful as that would have been."

He understood and admired the singleheartedness of the affection.

"Since your father is such a scholar he will want you to go to college. I think he wouldn't have set you about Greek if he had not."

Her heart gave a great bound. Was that the solution of it? Perhaps she was not giving him due credit.

"And after that?" he inquired.

"I suppose I shall teach. What are you going to do? But a man can choose among so many things."

"And I haven't chosen. Help me."

"I do not know anything about men's lives," she returned gravely. "You see, I have only met very few."

"Well, there is medicine—I do not like that—and law and theology and business. The dearest friend I have made is to enter the seminary and take the three years' course of theology in two years. He is a fine scholar."

"Is it Mr. Grandon?"

"Oh, no. Phil is a capital fellow, though. But mother admires Lawrence Hollis very much. I had him up here last Christmas, and he is coming again after the girls return. I think he has a fancy for Marjorie. I wish you could see them both. Marjorie is very sweet and sincere, Annis one of the high-minded, noble women. Daisy is the only whimsical one. We have all petted her so much. I suppose she has told you that Annis is to be married?"

Helen gently inclined her head.

"Father will miss her very much. Don't you think it must be rather hard to part with your children just as they have grown companionable?"

If she grew to be a companion to her father,

would he hate to part with her? But there was love, and she wanted the measure Mr. Bell gave to his girls.

"Yes, I think it must be hard to part with any one you love. But when they are not out of one's reach, and if they are making a new center." It came into her mind how happy Cousin Jenny was in her commonplace way, and how very proud Aunt Jane was of her.

"You haven't made your decision yet," she began with a touch of archness, yet her eyes were honest and sincere. "Somehow I can't fancy you a clergyman."

"No," gravely. "Then there is law, a counselor for big firms. I shouldn't like petty trials and common criminals. I want something active, something that calls up all one's energies and that savors of business that has stir and life in it. I can dawdle around in vacation, but I couldn't stand it for steady company."

"I don't know how a man could dawdle when there is such a big, magnificent world to

work in," Helen said energetically.

"There are people who do not really love to work."

They both laughed at that.

He was silent for awhile, and she opened her book again. How pretty her eyelids looked downcast.

"Read aloud, please," he said presently.

They were all short poems, and in a minor key. She had the gift of adaptability and made her voice fit the dainty verse and the surroundings.

"I wonder if there is another girl in the world who could sit here and talk and 'lend to the rhyme of the poet the sweetness of her voice,' and never make big eyes at one?" he mused. "What a fine comrade she would prove on a journey."

They were disturbed presently by some one striding over the ground at their back, and a genial voice cried out: "Hillo!"

Willard sprang up. "My dear Grandon!" he exclaimed. "I was coming down to the station for you presently."

"Then I have arrived a train too soon and interrupted," giving a mirthful glance at the young man.

"I had almost finished my book," Helen said in the most unembarrassed manner, as she greeted Mr. Grandon.

"And have you read up on mummies and

Egyptian lore, and the weighing of souls and your good deeds—"

"I am afraid my good deeds would go up with a swift bound," she said laughingly. "But that day at the park was a red-letter day to me, only I think all the days are of a joyous color."

"You call red joyous, then? Well, I suppose it is. And blue days, they match the color as well. Are there any green days?"

"Oh, yes, in the spring, when everything is fairly throbbing with life and stirs you through and through with hope," in her eager manner.

"And a white day?"

"Oh, that would be the happiest day of one's life."

"But you would have to wait until you were dying to be sure which had been the happiest. Think of the poets and philosophers who have hardly been able to count up one."

"Then I think it is best to get all the sweetness you can out of every day, and moderate your expectations."

"Oh, wise young Portia."

"Let us go and find the mater, who will give

you a welcome. Daisy has gone off pleasuring, but she will be home at dusk."

So they walked down to the porch where Mrs. Bell sat, sweet and refined, in her soft white gown with some sewing in her lap. She said she was very much improved, that she could get about quite comfortably.

When Mr. Bell came home he had the mail. He often preferred the walk. He handed Helen a letter from Mrs. Dayton.

The young men went upstairs to make a dinner toilet. Helen sat on the step and read her letter. Mrs. Dayton never wrote very lengthy epistles, and this was hurried through just before she went to market.

"Your father came home last night and appeared quite surprised that you had not returned. He seemed very weary and did not even get up for his light breakfast. I suppose you are having a nice time, but I think I would come home soon."

She had been overpersuaded for several days, not that it had needed much in that line, but every plan seemed to lap over into something next that she must see and do. It had been such a blissful time. It suggested a little

her first week with Mrs. Dayton; that was a child's joy in something she had never expected. And this had been beyond her anticipations as well. A home where love and tenderness were as daily food, not a garment put on for company occasions. She had learned so many things that she could use in days to come, and the satisfaction had been so heartfelt.

Mrs. Bell had a long, closely written missive from her eldest daughter, and the dinner bell rang before she had finished it. The young men came down, and they all went in to the feast. Mr. Bell had a bit of news about an old friend, and so did not inquire if her letter was a pleasure. The conversation ran on lines that did not demand much of her until they went back to the familiar resting-place. She sat near Mrs. Bell. She must tell her first. But Daisy and a host of young people paused, and there were sounds of laughter and confusion of voices until the carriage had started again. Mrs. Bell went in to see about Daisy's dinner.

"Has it been a long, lonesome day?" the girl asked as she rejoined them. "Why didn't you have a presentiment, Mr. Grandon, and

come up to luncheon. And Will, I hoped you would take Helen and mamma out driving."

"I had a very pleasant time. I think no day could be dull here. They have passed so delightfully that I feel as if I had overstayed"—yes, perhaps this was the best time to announce it—"and that I must bid adieu to these charming scenes and you fascinating people. The note of recall has sounded."

"Oh, was that in your letter? What a pity I did not lose it," said Mr. Bell humorously.

"We simply shall not let you go!" exclaimed Daisy decisively.

"No. I am not satisfied with your progress," announced Willard laughingly. "And, father, haven't you brought home a new book you want her to read?"

"I brought home one last night."

"It is a beautiful posy of thought. And she has read it through."

"Has anything happened-"

"My father has returned and is not very well," Helen began.

"But there are so many things yet to do. We haven't exhausted half our list. And a day or two cannot make much difference."

"I dare say your father has been junketing

round with the big fish, and the net has been too full of dainties. He needs a few days' rest. And if you go back and talk to him you will positively do him an injury," declared Willard with great apparent earnestness.

"But I really must go to-morrow."

There was a chorus of protestations.

Mrs. Bell brought her chair around to the side of the young girl and took her hand.

"Is it truly necessary?" she asked in her soft, solicitous tone. "It seems so sudden."

"That is because I have been abrupt," Helen answered deprecatingly. "I wish I had that other charming quality. It is tact that always does or says the right thing in the right place. And, now, have I spoiled the evening?"

She clasped her hand over the delicate one lying in the lap of the elder woman.

"Yes," declared Daisy. "You should have let us go on making our plans, and they would have been so fascinating that you could not refuse. After all, one day doesn't count unless one is seriously ill."

"Children, you must not be so insistent," said the mother gently.

"Because it is truly a trial for me to go.

You have been so more than kind. And it is the first lovely visit of my life. I have enjoyed every day and hour, every walk and drive, and the talks——"

"And the Greek lessons," interrupted Willard.

"Ah, you can't think how very grateful I am for them, and all your courtesy, and the books and discussions. Why, if I stayed any longer my brain would be packed so full I couldn't tell which to take out first."

"That would be a misfortune. Generally one does not have the right thing there to take out."

"And now let us talk it over sensibly. If you go to-morrow you will have to start by noon at least, as you must get home before dark. So we will have all the morning to prepare, and we will not spoil this evening."

"Then, Miss Helen, read some of those dainty little poems for father. They are just the thing for a summer evening."

She was glad Willard had proposed that. The lamp was placed in a sheltered corner, but hardly a leaf stirred, though all the air was sweet with falling dews, and the clear, girlish voice with its delicate emphasis seemed to make

the ballad-like verses living stories of human beings. Daisy leaned over on her father's chair, touching his shoulder, her hand in his, moved by the tender sentiments or smiling a little at the gayer ones.

"Now for some songs," said Mr. Bell, when she had closed the book. And so they finished up the evening.

He said his adieus first the next morning.

"I want you to take this," and he put a little parcel in her hand. "I shall get another copy. You will always think of the pleasant visit, the enjoyment on both sides. I want you to be Daisy's friend. She is willful and exigent at times, but you are so sincere and upright that you would strengthen some of her sweet, but weaker traits. And you must come again. I wish this might be like a second home to you."

"I cannot thank you sufficiently." Her voice broke and tears glistened in her eyes.

Daisy was quite capricious. Mr. Grandon spoke of going down on the same train.

"Oh, we haven't had any visit at all!" she declared. "I wouldn't have gone yesterday if you had sent word."

"And spoiled a day's pleasure," laughed the young fellow. "I come so often that it was not worth that sacrifice."

"And I have been helping Helen pack and talking to her—"

"Except when she was at her Greek. What a persevering girl!"

Daisy made a coquettish moue.

Helen thought one of the most blessed events of the visit was the lovely talk she had with Mrs. Bell that morning, the motherliness that penetrated to her inmost soul; and yet gave a pang at the thought of a life without it. Could any one be quite like a mother? But were all mothers like Mrs. Bell?

Willard and Daisy drove the guests down to the station and said good-bye, rather unwillingly on the girl's part. Not that she grudged Helen this attendance exactly, but they might both have stayed one evening longer, she insisted.

Grandon crossed over the ferry and put Helen in her train. Then her happy visit was over. Oh, no, there would always live the golden remembrance of it, the picture of home that she had vaguely gathered from hearing girls talk, the devotion of Mrs. Aldred and her daughters that was more like sisterly friendship, and her two golden years.

The sky had clouded over as she walked up the familiar street. It looked plain and rather common for one of the best streets in the vilage. Yet Mrs. Van Dorn with her worldwide knowledge had been satisfied to spend the summer here.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" Mrs. Dayton hurried down to the front gate.

"Father?" she almost gasped with a throb in her throat. "Was he very ill?"

"Oh, he is well, but fretful because you were not at home. He was quite upset the day I wrote, but he will be all right now. You have spoiled him."

"Spoiled him?" with a sort of incredulous

inquiry.

"Yes. You and Mr. Warfield were at his beck and call. I think he is used to being waited upon, though I must say he doesn't require very much. Did you have a nice time? There are some letters for you."

She bathed her face and brushed her hair, then put on a cool summer gown and went to her father's room. "Oh!" he exclaimed, glancing up, scarcely noting the eager face and eyes that had been striving for tenderness the last half hour. "What a visit you have made! I had no thought you would stay so long! And I came home to find a pile of work that no one could seem to make out. I do sometimes use wrong letters, I'm so used to other languages. Your writing is plainer. And there has been so much confusion seeing strange people."

"You were highly appreciated in your addresses. We had an account of it in the paper," she said with interest.

"Appreciated by the very few who were scholars, run after by the multitude who take up any strange cult, who think Assyriology and Theosophy and Zoroastrianism all the same thing. Yet I met some fine thinkers. But there is too much superficiality in all these institutions, too much hurry. I am glad you have come. Is it warm for you?" noting the flushed face. "Let us go down on the porch. I'd like you to read to me while I make corrections."

Helen quietly accepted. There was almost an hour before dinner, quite an hour afterward, when Professor Grant said he was weary, and would go to rest. His eyes troubled him a little by lamplight.

Helen longed for a good cry, her heart was so full and she felt so sore. But Mrs. Dayton wanted to hear all about her visit, and was cordially sweet. It was a delight to talk over the Bells and to have such an appreciative listener. She felt that it was ungrateful to allow herself to contrast the two families.

Helen read her letters before she went to bed. Mrs. Wiley's was very kindly. She mentioned the branches she should desire to have Helen teach the day pupils, and there might be an oversight needed during the evening study hour.

Juliet's letter was several sheets long. She had made her guardian very angry by her refusal to go abroad, and, unfortunately, he had blamed Mrs. Howard for the matter. Mrs. Davis would feel that she, Juliet, had been very ungrateful, and the poor girl was almost heartbroken by the tumult she had stirred up.

"Oh, Helen, if I could not have you next year to comfort and strengthen me, I should despair! And it seems to me poor grandfather's fortune is largely the cause of it. Mrs. Davis thinks because there is so much money I ought to be trained to spend it wisely, which means to make a great plunge into gayeties that frighten me. I wish there was just enough to live on comfortably. Think of her buying me two thousand dollars worth of diamonds and jewelry! Of course they are locked up in a bank safe. I am counting the weeks until I see you. We are going to a quiet seaside place—couldn't you join us? Oh, do say yes. I can't write half the things I want to say."

How delightful that would be! Oh, if one could choose one's friends—yes, and relatives! If she had been born in a family like the Bells, and cared for with such tender solicitude! But she would like to be her own self, and she laughed in spite of her depression, that she should like her own self better than any one else, when there must be so many finer girls in the world.

There was a very busy week, with reading to her father, copying and studying.

He had said the day after her return:

"I dare say you never looked at the Greek while you were gone, and you will have to begin again."

"Oh, yes; I had a lesson every day, and I

think I have made some progress," she returned in a bright tone, feeling this at least would please him.

"A lesson?" raising his brows in surprise.

"Yes. Mr. Willard Bell is at Columbia College, in his last year. And when he found I was in real earnest he gave me some assistance."

"Which I dare say is of little absolute use. Young collegians esteem their own attainments highly."

She returned no answer, but he rather grudgingly admitted that she had made some advance, only there were certain things to be corrected. She missed her pleasant helper. Addison Grant was an excellent teacher in the earlier years, but he had gone so far beyond that, and was so used to scholars instead of pupils, that he was quite impatient with her progress.

He took an oversight of her reading as well. The daily paper he considered rather hurtful than otherwise. It merely skimmed over events and gossiped about trivialities. So with most of the ordinary magazines. They distracted the mind. There was too great a variety, since most of it was useless.

She had been reading to Mrs. Dayton out of her little book of poems when Miss Westerly in passing beckoned her to the gate.

"We have some interesting new books," she began. "Can't you come in and look them over? There is one fine novel that I am sure you will like, and a charming volume of Hearn's—on Japan, of course. I have been reading up Japan lately. The advancement of the nation is something marvelous. She seems to have awakened from centuries of mental slumber. Oh, walk down the street a little way with me. I get hold of you so seldom now."

Professor Grant picked up the dainty book lying on the chair. A collection of girlish verses that had better have been thrown into the fire—would, if there had been a sensible man about. No wonder there was so much triviality among the rising generation. Did Helen ever try her hand at verses, he wondered. And then the flyleaf caught his eye.

"Helen Grant. In remembrance of a pleasant visit. From her friend,

"Willard Alden Bell."

If he had been in a room with a fire Helen

would never have seen her dearly loved poems again, though she knew many of them by heart. A young man, teaching her Greek, talking nonsense by the hour, giving her love verses, no doubt expecting to correspond with her. There must be a stop put to this at once. What should he do with his daughter? She had the making of a thorough scholar, he could see that. But she must be rightly directed. The finest aims of youth were often spoiled by this silliness called love, a momentary madness that wrecked too many lives. If he had not sympathized with this other young girl and taken an interest in her, thinking she could be raised above a petty round, he would not have wasted precious years of his life.

CHAPTER VIII

UNWELCOME TIDINGS

"I have been considering some plans, Helen, and deciding about your future. I find I shall be detained here longer than I thought. Two magazines of a very high order have importuned me for an article, and I have accepted. Then a professor of a Western university has forwarded me some curious discoveries that I feel inclined to look into, concerning a prehistoric race on this northern continent. So it will be at least three months before I shall be ready to return."

"Yes," she answered, with a sort of vague slowness, hardly knowing whether to express regret or not.

"I shall take you with me," in a clear, decisive tone. "I want to direct your education."

"Father!" Her whole being rose in protest.

"Are you surprised? I suppose a parent

has a right to decide what is proper for a child."

"But—" Yes, she would make a struggle. She was a human being and had some rights. Her eyes flashed with spirit as she gathered her forces.

"But—I do not care to go. I made some arrangements in the summer when I found I had to depend upon myself. I am under promise to go back to Aldred House, and am to teach for the rest of my education. I want to graduate—"

He made a gesture as if he were waving away flimsy reasons, but his expression was inexorable.

"There are better chances of education abroad. And if you want to go to college, there are colleges that will confer quite as much honor upon you as any American institution. The proper place, I take it, for a daughter is in her father's care, especially when she has but one parent."

Helen sat stunned. The lines about her mouth constricted, as if she could not shape them into words. Then, as if breaking all bounds, she cried indignantly:

"There were all those years-"

A very faint color flushed his cheek, but he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon her, as if he meant to conquer by a subtle strength.

"I think I have explained why I kept silence, though it was far from being intentional or, rather, premeditated. You were a little child to whom food and shelter were the most pressing necessities. Your mother begged me to leave you with your uncle. I did not, could not, tell how the child would develop. If you were a commonplace girl, likely to grow into the ordinary woman who merely wants a husband and a home and a few neighbors to gossip with, I should not have disturbed your easily satisfied dreams. But you can do something better. You have the making of a scholar if you get the right training. I prefer you should not waste a life that holds such possibilities."

"I did not mean to waste it," she interrupted proudly. "I had plans. And I was willing to work."

"A girl's plans are generally impracticable. It requires experience to decide which are the best steps to take in life. I have made several mistakes that I wish you to avoid, indeed, mean that you shall."

His voice was so even and unemotional that it was like a sentence, and Helen's energy appeared wrested from her by the very moderation of her father's tones, that certainly did conquer without convincing. She was not of age. There was no one to take her part. A brother would have been so much at this crisis.

"What were you to do in this school?" he asked.

Helen explained in a resolute tone.

"It is much better not to waste any time. As soon as I can settle these temporary matters we will take up regular studies. And I do not want you to subvert your mind by foolish indulgences that weaken concentration. All kinds of modern fiction are ruinous, and the silly modern versification is to be strictly condemned. Girls who string out an endless lot of weak, fatuous imagination, interspersed with clouds and flowers, sighs and showers and maudlin sentiment, ought to be set to bread-making or the sweeping of rooms."

It seemed to Helen that the pang of dying could not be any harder. She felt as if she would as soon give up life as to give up the friends of the last two years.

"When were you to begin this treadmill round?" he inquired with a touch of sarcasm.

"I had a letter from Mrs. Wiley this noon.
I thought"—and her voice shook a little—
"I would like to explain to you—"

"Oh, you did consider the propriety of consulting me!" he asked with an ironical accent.

"You were not here when the offer was made to me," Helen returned with spirit. "As I said, I felt dependent upon my own exertions. School begins on the tenth of September. I was asked to be there by the eighth."

"Will you let me see the letter?"

Helen went for it, choking down the sob in her throat. No, there was nothing in it that referred to her note. It was cordial but business-like.

"Perhaps I had better answer it," he proposed.

Helen was about to protest; then she said coldly:

"As you like;" and held up her head with a certain pride.

He placed the note in his book.

"I suppose you have quite a large correspondence," he asked in a rather caustic tone.

"No," she answered. "I do not think I am fond of writing letters."

"A most excellent thing. One is apt to get letters quite too full of imagination in one's early years. Then, it is so easy to fancy one's self ill-used."

Oh, would letters be forbidden when she went away? She could not, would not, go. Something must happen. Why, a convent would be preferable!

"Get Homer and read to me," he said presently.

"I can't read—I am——" and the flood of tears she had been vainly trying to repress would find their way. She sprang up, and without a word flew to her room and buried her face on Mrs. Dayton's breast, who stood there with her hair about her shoulders, beginning her toilet.

"Helen, my dear child, what is it? Oh, don't sob so. What has happened?" And her arms were around the child as if they would shelter her from all sorrow.

It was some time before Helen could speak, and then the cause came out in fragments of wild protest.

"Helen, Helen, dear-"

"Oh!" she cried, "I used to think I would be so proud and glad to have my father come home when Aunt Jane made ill-natured flings about him. And he is a gentleman and held in high esteem, it seems, by fine scholars and all such, but I would change him if I could for Uncle Jason and that dear, tender love. I do not think he has any real affection for me, only, he believes I may make a scholar. But if I am compelled to pore all my life over those dead-and-gone people and horrible wars and heathen gods—I can't do it! Do you suppose I will have to go?"

"Oh, my dear, I can't bear to think of it. I even hated to have you go with Mrs. Van Dorn, only I knew that would be so delightful for you. Oh, don't cry so, dear. You will have an hysteric, which wouldn't be bad if it would disgust your father with you. There, sit here by the window and cool your eyes. Oh, I think something will happen—must happen! Why, it would be too dreadful. And to go away from all your friends!"

Mrs. Dayton finished arranging her hair and donned a white gown, which gave her a certain freshness. Then she had to go down to see about the dinner. After awhile Helen opened her portfolio and took out her pen. Mrs. Wiley should have something beside the cold little note her father would send. For Helen felt very grateful that there was another outlook. Something might happen. It did not seem as if she could be forced away against her will. There might be a loophole of escape.

She would not go down to the table, but presently stole out to the kitchen, and, though she didn't feel hungry, ate a little to please Joanna.

"Did father say anything?" she inquired, when Mrs. Dayton came up to go to bed.

"No. Some one asked where you were, and I explained that you had a headache. Then he sat a long while on the porch. Oh, dear, I don't know whether it is best to have relations or not."

Helen sent her letter off by Mr. Conway the next morning. Her father met her at the breakfast-table as if nothing had discomposed him. Then she read for him, studied Greek, went over some of her Latin, wrote while he was taking his rest in his chair; but about four she rose and said she was tired and could not work any more, and went down to the Library.

She would not say anything at present to Miss Westerly.

Addison Grant sat and thought for some time. Her mother would have cried and teased and then sulked. She inherited some of his stamina and self-control. It would be a sin to have such a fine mind frittered away. Presently he would be growing older and need some one who could assist in the right manner, as she could when he had trained her. And who had a better right to a child than the

parent?

Something went wrong with the book, and Professor Grant had to go up to the city, but he laid out such a quantity of work that Helen did not have much of a holiday. But she went home with Uncle Jason and stayed all night, to the great delight of the children. Aurelia was quite a study to her. She was fifteen now, and was both tall and stout for her age, and had a rather pretty, infantile face, with big, soft, dark eyes, a fair skin, with rather light hair, and a sort of coaxing mouth that a city belle would have made wonderfully effective. She was slow in her motions, dropping into any seat that was handy, or even on the grass if she was out of doors. She really

dawdled over everything, and Aunt Jane's continual prodding seemed to have no effect. She was not a bit like Jenny, "All Mulford," Aunt Jane said. Fanny was quite a book girl, and tormented her mother with the "whys" of everything. How different they were. It puzzled and amused Helen.

When Professor Grant returned it was evident he was far from well. His eyes had a dull look, and there was a flush in his cheeks quite unusual for him. Then his voice had a huskiness and he seemed easily excited, impatient.

"You certainly have a fever," declared Mrs. Dayton. "And you ought to have a doctor."

He would not listen to this until one morning he tried to rise and fell back on the pillow. His mind wandered a little, too. Helen was much alarmed, and Dr. Bradford was summoned.

"It is a sort of low fever, partly nervous. He has been overtaxing himself. But, though he has the appearance of being frail, he has considerable strength to fall back upon. We'll pull him through all right," was the encouraging verdict.

Helen was startled, almost conscience-smit-

ten. What if the "something" she had ardently desired should be her father's death? It seemed to her young hopefulness a dreadful thing to go out of life, to be shut away in the dark earth, to have the flowers come up and blossom, the grasses wave, the birds sing, and still lie there cold and unheeding. And he had so many plans for the years to come, so much he meant to give the world! She shuddered as she looked at him.

The boarders went away. Mr. Warfield returned, school opened, and Hope settled itself to the autumnal order of things. Mrs. Downs came over to help with the nursing, for Mrs. Dayton insisted that Helen should stay in the sick room as little as possible.

Daisy Bell was inconsolable at first at Helen's defection. She had explained that her father had some different plans for her; she could not bear to sign what seemed the death warrant of all their hopes.

"I just hated to come back to school," she wrote. "I believe I wouldn't stay now except that I am to graduate—if I am smart enough—and the pater will be heartbroken if I do not. Helen, you have just stolen away half his heart. Even Marjorie thinks you

must be a wonderful girl, and wants to see you. School is dull and drear. Mrs. Wiley is sweet and nice, but she isn't Mrs. Aldred. So many of the old girls are gone—but I wouldn't care if you were here. Annis will be married at Christmas, and I shall have a glad, gay holiday. Are you going to school anywhere else, or are you to be your father's secretary all the rest of his life? Oh, do write to me every week, or I shall wither away and perish."

Miss Craven's letter had a deeper disappointment in it, if it was not so fervid and impassioned. Helen was touched to the heart by her sorrow, for she knew no other regard would soften it as it might in Daisy's case. "I feel so lost without you," she wrote, "and everything is so strange that it is beginning all over again, and I shall meet no one quite like you. You seem to find the way to one's heart without rudely tearing it open. I want some one all the time. Are you not ashamed of me that I am too weak to stand alone unless I draw within my shell and shut out even benign influences because I am afraid to trust. If we could have seen each other! I would gladly have come to you."

She had excused herself from accepting Miss Craven's invitation, though it had been done with great bitterness of heart. And the absolute truth was that she did not want any friend of hers subjected to her father's examination and criticism. She had a feeling that he would object to all girl friendships, and if they were once forbidden she could hardly go against his judgment. How it would be if she were taken abroad she dreaded to think.

She had been kept out of the sick room at the doctor's request, but she had gone on with her studies. Indeed, it seemed quite like old times to have Mr. Warfield as a teacher again, and he was quite assiduous, though he did not approve altogether of the professor's methods. And he was not decided whether he liked the project of going abroad or not. He understood that Addison Grant had the best right to his child, and that marriage would be the only impediment that could block it. Helen was too young to think of such a thing, and she was not the kind of a girl to feed upon admiration, though she had a very sincere desire for appreciation.

"If you should go," he said, "I'll make London my objective point next summer. By that time you will be longing for a familiar face."

"I am afraid I shall long for familiar faces all the time," and her voice had a great tremble in it.

"Yet you were quite willing to go with that Mrs. Van Dorn. You would have been among strangers all the same," he returned rather ungraciously.

Her heart cried out that affection would have been the bond in that case, but Mr. Warfield had always insinuated some ulterior motive on the part of the elder woman.

She ventured to talk it over with Miss Westerly, and was a little surprised at her way of taking it.

"I shall be sorry to lose sight of you," she said. "There are so few intellectual women or even girls with any promise in Hope. I am surprised at times. You know, I can gauge by the reading. Even if they take up a solid work the vital interest seems lacking. Agnes Ford expects to teach, and is a good scholar, but only a few days ago she came in quite out of humor and said petulantly: 'I want a good love story with plenty of spice in it; where they quarrel and make up. But you won't

catch me quarreling with any man who wants to marry me. If I thought I would have to teach school ten years I'd put an end to myself.'

"'You ought not undertake it feeling that way,' I replied.

"'It's about as respectable an employment as one can choose, and I may get a chance to see a little of the world if I'm not poked off in some dull country place. This is bad enough."

"Did she find her love story?" queried Helen.

"She finally took 'Molly Bawn,' that she had read before. Maybe you don't remember, but the first time you came in here was for a volume of Macaulay's poems—you wanted 'Horatius at the Bridge'—and I took a fancy to you at once. It would be odd now if you should go abroad after all. I suppose this would be for education?"

"Yes. But I think I could find enough education here," with a half smile that was rather sad.

"Yet there's that splendid Girton, and then you have a chance to see so many famous people. Think of Miss Gladstone teaching for the pure love of it, and many another. I do believe intelligent women are rated more highly in England. I should like to go myself and perhaps find something more satisfying in an intellectual way. Yes, I am really glad for you, and I shall beg for letters. There will be so many fine old things to see, so many historical places. Oh, dear!" with a long sigh that would have been envy if she had not been a generous admirer.

Oh, no one quite knew! Mrs. Dayton understood best, but she had a friendly delicacy that kept her from commenting on the father to the child. Although she said: "Something will happen! It's borne in upon my mind that you won't go."

It could hardly be a comfort, when the only circumstances that could prevent were too dreadful to contemplate for a moment. Even if she made herself disagreeable, that might not answer. It was natural for her to look on the best side.

Mrs. Downs went away. Mr. Grant could walk about and help himself. He seemed thinner than ever, which had hardly appeared possible, and the doctor proposed taking him out while the weather was so fine.

"I must get to work," he said to Helen, with a gentle sort of energy that awakened her pity. "I am half sorry I promised those articles, only they will be of great service. I think I can dictate. Get a pencil and pad. Or first, get those notes on 'The Migration of the early Aryan race,' and read aloud to me. It will clear my mind."

She read, occasionally blundering over his crabbed writing. Then he began to talk at times so rapidly and involved that she became sadly confused, but she tried to keep command of her nerves and temper, and to follow his incoherencies.

Presently he made a long pause and leaned back in his chair.

- "You are very tired," with gentle solicitude.
- "Yes. It seems foolish for a man to give up for such a trifle, a little run of fever. And I am seldom ill." His tone was impatient.
 - "Can I do anything-" starting up.
- "No, no. I'll be all right in a moment yes, you might go down and get me a cup of tea, clear, and not very strong, but hot."
- "Perhaps broth would be better," hesitatingly.

"I said tea;" with a motion of the hand.

The tone was not cross, but with a slight accent, as if he wished to be obeyed, not questioned.

Joanna insisted upon the broth, but Mrs. Dayton sent the tea. Helen placed it upon the small table at his right and laid the napkin on his lap. She was curiously moved by his delicate appearance. If she dared offer him some sort of caress! She smoothed his hair lightly. It was such beautiful soft hair, like fine-spun silk.

"Don't, Helen," he said in the same unemotional tone. "I never could bear to have my hair touched. That old woman set me half crazy trying to brush it one morning. I generally cut the ends, for I dislike a barber's manipulations."

Helen was glad she was at the back of the chair and that he had begun to sip his tea. She proudly winked the tears away.

"That tea is refreshing. Mrs. Dayton is an excellent housekeeper. Now, suppose you read what you have written. Read slowly, and stop at the end of the paragraph, so that I may consider." There were many emendations and corrections. She was just through when the dinner bell rang.

"I'll take my rest and you can go at your Greek. Let me see—come up at half-past two."

She had hard work to eat any dinner. Mr. Warfield scolded a little about the triviality of girls, Mr. Conway had some rather amusing notes about woman shoppers. Helen said her father had begun to work a little, at which Mr. Warfield eyed her sharply, and she flushed in spite of herself. She went straight to her room afterward that she might escape talking to him, and when she saw him going down the path she took her book and went clear to the end of the garden. Oh, how lovely the world was! Birds were traversing the golden air with a swift dazzle, bees were humming, the drying corn rustled and rippled, there was a soft monotone in the grass as a gust of wind swept by, the nameless, pleasant stir of all joyous things. Oh, why could not the world be full of love and happiness? Why should any one be dull and cold and indifferent?

She could not study in this tumult of emotion. She said verses over to herself, simple, sweet, comforting. They were like balm to her sore heart.

Mr. Warfield met Dr. Bradford hurrying home to his late dinner.

"See here!" he cried. "Your antiquated patient is up and at work! If he is anxious to join the 'innumerable throng,' I don't see why Miss Helen should be forced to, unless he is so imbued with the spirit of those old heathens, who immolated wives and children and servants in the same grave, that it is an article of faith."

"At work? H-m, h-m! Yes, I'll look in upon him."

So a little after three, when Helen's hands were growing cold with nervousness and her eyes had a strained look from the tears that were back of them, Dr. Bradford came upstairs.

"Hi! hi!" he cried good-naturedly. "I suppose this is out of sympathy for me—that I may have a chance of running up a bigger bill. Miss Helen, you are to take a good out-of-doors run, and I shall bundle your father off for a drive. I have to go out a mile or so, and would like company. Are you doing much of this work?"

"Only a very little," rather impatiently.

"Did you take your rest?"

"Oh, yes. But I am not in the mood-"

"That is just the time to go out in the fresh air," interrupted the doctor. "Miss Helen, you take a walk of an hour or two every day. Now you may be dismissed. I can attend to your father."

Mr. Grant was a little obstinate at first, but the doctor carried his point, helped him into a coat, and then downstairs. The day was too lovely to miss, and no one had a promise of to-morrow. Three weeks was long enough to stay in the house for a trifling illness.

Then he led him to talk about the new discoveries that he really wasn't interested in, since they were not medical, but the invalid enjoyed his drive and came down to dinner that night quite himself. There was an autumnal dew falling, and he dared not sit on the porch, but he summoned Helen upstairs to read to him.

"My eyes have not recovered their usual strength," he said. "You must be eyes to me a little while."

Ah, how gladly she would do anything from love. There was the remembrance of the

household up the Hudson, the tenderness that was a natural atmosphere, the little caressing ways, the eyes answering eyes, the smiles shining like a beam of the sun and pervading all with gladness. Why was it that she had come to care so much about being loved, that she shrank from the time when she and her father should be alone in a strange country? There would be no cordially fond Uncle Jason, no warm, friendly Mrs. Dayton, and she almost knew that girlish letters would be tabooed. Or he might ask to see them then, and she could not endure his cold, critical eyes scrutinizing Daisy's exuberant and vehement epistles. Yes, she would be all alone with an undemonstrative, scholarly man who cared not for the ordinary happenings of the life of to-day. Oh, could she endure it?

Some days it seemed as if she grew quite apathetic. She came and went, read or wrote, took his criticisms without comment, studied the tasks he gave her, and tried to look forward to weeks and months of delving into old ruins and deciphering vainglorious tablets over victories that seemed horrible when one looked at the vanquished side. Was it truly her duty?

One morning she woke with a fragment of a dream in her mind—she had been back to Oakdale. She could almost see herself on the low seat, leaning her arm on Mrs. Bell's knee, looking up into the true, motherly eyes and listening to the affection that had its being in birthright, not the imaginary motherhood. She had never told any one all the story. She would ask her what a child's duty really was.

CHAPTER IX

THE CLOUD OVER THE SUN

A curious feeling came over her as she wrote her letter, a yearning pity for her father as she thought of all the joys he was losing out of life, all the gladnesses on every side, in every gleam of sunshine, in every flower that shook out fragrance, in the glad carol of the birds, even the hum of the bee, who did not disdain his song as he worked. It was the voice God had given him, and he used it merrily without envying the nightingale. That one should miss all this!

She was very dutiful, with a certain kind of pride. She did not exaggerate or lay bare any faults, it was simply the contrast, the unlikeness. He was a scholar of the past, disapproving of the present, she was full of the world of to-day. Ought she to give up all her own plans and wishes and enjoyments and be buried in these abstruse problems for years to come, the glad, golden years of youth? If she

were older she would take her own way; did the two or three years give another person the right to decide?

She knew Mr. Warfield did not approve of the plan and secretly worked against it. She had never come to an open discussion with him, for she understood just what he would say, but his plan for her future was hardly her own, and her loyalty was wounded by small, sarcastic flings, as if the real world was not so much interested in these bygone subjects as her father supposed, and that it could never make any part of a woman's life.

Professor Grant did not seem to object to her studying with him. He was very thorough and ambitious, the elder man found, and eager to help along any real student. Then, it would so soon be ended with these other matters that annoyed him. He was still suspicious of the young man at the university, and of the girls she seemed to affiliate with so readily. He saw them passing the house now and then chattering and laughing, their arms around each other's waists. Sometimes they parted with kisses, a very foolish and ill-bred habit. He had never been fond of caresses, and in the early part of their life his wife had

tried him sorely, where a more judicious woman might now and then have won a point. He would not begin it with Helen. She would soon outgrow the weak and silly desire. Real regard could subsist without it.

After much tribulation one of the articles was finished and sent on its way. He was quite his olden self again. Dr. Bradford had insisted upon the drives, and was a good deal interested in the talks they held. Helen took her recess late in the afternoon. She was getting interested in some of the High School girls, and she had made a new and very pleasant friend, a lady in whom Miss Westerly took a warm interest.

Mrs. Wilmarth was something of an invalid, but quite a cultivated person, very fond of music, yet not able to play much for herself. Pianos were something of a rarity in Hope, and Helen was delighted when she found she could give Mrs. Wilmarth this enjoyment and indulge her own longing, for she had begun to play very well and missed the solace greatly.

There was another point of unlikeness between father and child. Addison Grant had no ear for music; indeed, much of it annoyed him. He had heard chants in dim old cathe-

drals that came up to his idea of it; anything else he endured with inward impatience when he was compelled to, and never of his own desire. Young girls at the piano were simply his abhorrence. And as Mrs. Dayton had no instrument, music had seldom been mentioned between them.

Helen enjoyed the twilight in Mrs. Wilmarth's cozy parlor, where a grate fire was always lighted in the early autumn. She played and sang with a heart full of eager delight, glad to please another and gratify herself.

"You really ought to make something of your voice," Mrs. Wilmarth said one evening. "It has fine possibilities, and there is church and concert singing, if one never attained to anything higher."

Helen drew a quick breath, and then her heart seemed to drop in her body. Was she called upon to give up everything?

Sometimes Mr. Warfield found her and walked home with her, but she liked best the rambles by herself. She still had a childish delight in scuffling through the fallen leaves. Sidewalks were usually swept in the morning at Hope, so by night they were quite covered again. The rustle was like nothing else, it

took her back to the childhood of dreams that she had once lived in. That world of fancy wherein her father had come home rich and triumphant over Aunt Jane's predictions, and they had both gone away in a coach. She gave a short, sad laugh thinking of it.

"Can't I share your good time?" said the familiar voice of Mr. Warfield. "And what will you give me for a letter? This is not from Aldred House. How many admirers you have!"

Helen was glad he could not see her face, for he would wonder at the quick flush.

"I don't know that I have anything better than a 'thank you.' That is the coin in which I generally reward Mr. Conway."

"And you put us on a par?" in assumed affront.

"Yes, when you are letter carriers."

"Oh, why do you rush along so fast?"

"Because it must be getting late. I stayed at Mrs. Wilmarth's until the last moment. There was some fascinating old music."

"I thought you hated old things. I heard you say so only this morning," he returned in a teasing tone.

"I believe I specified. I love the dear old

world, and it is older than anything else. I love October, and there have been thousands of Octobers. And I love to sit and ramble over music that has sad and sweet and pathetic phases. The people who love can hate as well; it is the indifferent ones who never go to extremes."

"You won't be ranked among the Laodiceans."

Helen laughed at that.

"Still, I have heard of people who blew hot and cold in a breath and were not admirable."

"Oh, where are you going?"

She had passed the gate. Mr. Warfield opened it, and she ran like a deer up the path.

"She has forgotten about her letter," he thought.

Helen saw that they were all in the dining room, so she put her hat and wrap on the rack and went in at once. She would rather her father did not know Mr. Warfield had walked home with her. She disliked to meet the cold, disapproving look in his eyes.

Mrs. Dayton glanced up with a smile at the rosy, sparkling girl. Mr. Walters sat beside her father, who was in the midst of some explanation and hardly noted her.

Mr. Warfield took out the letter and laid it on the table, opened two notes of his own, which were not of much account, brushed his hair, and went down leisurely.

Joanna had gone away on her annual visit, and there was a young girl who came in for the fortnight. Mrs. Dayton did not mind staying at home while Helen's fate hung in the balance.

The two scholars had been going over the legendary history of the lost tribes of Israel. There had been so many dispersions of that wonderful people.

"Dear me! If I had to carry so many people in my head I should go crazy," said Mrs. Dayton in a laughing aside to Helen.

"Come upstairs," her father requested, as he rose from the table. "I want you to read those notes you made for Mr. Walters. I could not find them."

Helen followed with quiet grace. In the hall she passed the two men and said:

"Let me go first and light the lamp." Meanwhile she found the book of notes under a pile of other matter on the table.

"I wish you would leave things where I could find them!" he exclaimed rather testily.

She made no reply, but seated herself and read speculations, quotations, and a curious chain of reasoning.

"The best place to look will be the Astor Library," commented the old clergyman.

"I am half sorry I promised the article, but then I had some entirely new ground, old ground dug up afresh," with his short laugh. "I am glad to see scholars taking an interest in these matters. And now—you said the train left at ten?"

"Yes. That gets us in in good time to look around a bit. And now I must go after a most pleasant visit. You cannot think how I shall appreciate this run to the city with you."

"And I was dreading the journey alone. Not but that I feel perfectly well now, only I find I have to be careful of my eyes."

They said their good-nights to each other.

"I shall go to New York to-morrow, and make the last arrangement about the book, I hope. I did want to leave before the November storms, but I think we shall be able to get home by Christmas. Except in a bad storm a big steamer is as comfortable as a hotel. I

shall try to see an oculist, for I am not ready to have my eyes give out."

"Oh, do," Helen said earnestly. "But does the doctor think—are you really strong enough?"

"I'm right in the prime of life," with a nervous accent. "That touch of fever doesn't count. Mr. Walters is almost twenty years older than I am, and he thinks nothing of journeying about alone. Now, look me up these things. I made a list of them this afternoon. Do them up securely and label them. I hate things all in a muddle."

Helen looked them over carefully, numbered them, and fastened up the parcel. He brought out a small valise and packed some articles in it. He was so used to waiting upon himself that Helen found most offers of help annoyed him.

Then he had some charges to give her about studying, some notes she was to make, and presently he said:

"I feel very wakeful. I think I will lie here on the lounge while you read to me. Get that volume of the Zend and read the passages I have marked. There is true poetry for you. Those that I have left out are, I think, later

interpolations, when materialisms crept in. It is so with 'most all religions. They can't keep their purity."

She read until it was almost ten, when he said: "I think now I shall go to sleep. Thank you, and good-night."

He was the nearest relative she had, yet in that tone he might have dismissed any ordinary attendant.

"Good-night," in a voice that was low and sad.

Mr. Warfield was down in the hall waiting.

"I pity you if you have to read him to sleep for the next twenty years!" he exclaimed in a vexed tone that was no comfort to her. "Here is your letter," handing it to her.

She merely nodded her thanks; she could not trust her voice.

"If she were two years older!" he mused.

"Helen, I am up here," said Mrs. Dayton, so the girl turned through the little hall and went up the back stairs, to Mr. Warfield's chagrin.

"Oh, dear! I shall be so glad to have Joanna back," the elder began in a tired tone, yet she gave a yawn with a half laugh. "Marty is good as far as she goes, but, like

a short blanket in winter, it doesn't go far enough. If I lost Joanna I think I should give up housekeeping. That old Jonas Stent has been hanging around all summer. But six children! I'm glad Joanna has more sense. And Betty Cairns is dangling after him. Strange how things go criss-cross! Betty 'd be glad enough of a home—oh, you poor child! you are heavy-eyed, and you looked so splendid when you came in to dinner."

She opened the fond arms and took her to her bosom. Helen hid her face and cried a little.

"You'll have a week's rest, dear," said the comforting voice. "You are too hard worked."

Oh, what would she do without any friend? How dreary London looked!

She did not read her letter, but just slipped it into her portfolio. It was something to be read at leisure, but she knew of a certainty it could not change anything.

There was a little stir the next morning, as there always is at a departure. Mr. Warfield insisted upon taking the valise to the station, and Helen walked the short distance with her father. His clerical compeer was waiting for him. Father and child bade each other a decorous good-bye.

"I'm going to take a holiday," she said to Mrs. Dayton on her return. "I'm going to have a leisurely walk over to the Center and spend the night with Cousin Jenny, and tomorrow at Uncle Jason's. You must take it as restfully as you can, and give the two men just bread and butter and pie."

Mrs. Dayton gave her bright, wholesome laugh.

"You can't do a better thing," she returned.

"And for goodness' sake don't take a book with you. I look for your father to turn into one and be placed on a library shelf."

That amused Helen. She went upstairs and put on a pretty silk gingham gown, dropped her letter and a few articles into a dainty satchel, and picked up her parasol.

"Have just the nicest time you can;" and in this parting the kisses were warm and tender. The sense of love thrilled through Helen, for she was coming to the time when a girl longs for demonstrated affection.

It was a royal October day. The leaves had fallen sufficiently to discern the tracery of slender limbs against the hazy sky. It had

been a warm fall, and the roadsides after she left the streets were still starred with flowers and clusters of balsams that had not yet grown fuzzy. The yellow lingered in the golden-rod, the clematis growing over fences had turned into "Aaron's beard." Here was a path through a stubble field that cut off a corner of the road, and was always tracked as soon as the grain was cut. Grasshoppers sprang up with their long leaps, here and there a flock of birds were gleaning stray grains. By the edge of the fence ran a small stream that was marked by a strong, vivid green, as if it defied the hand of change. She stepped over the creek and climbed the fence—that was like old times. This was a meadow where wild turnip and daisies were making a second growth, but the path kept on. Now it was farms and farmhouses, neglected gardens, the smell of drying fruit and wild grapes. At the farther end of this there was a strip of woods.

She sat down on a stone where a great oak spread its red-brown leaves, and the ground around was dotted with acorns on a bed of moss. It seemed curious that she had not read her letter until now, that she had not been impatient about it. She knew in her heart

what the decision must be, that there was no room for the "something" Mrs. Dayton resolutely clung to. It was not so much the decision she asked for as the strength of the wise, experienced heart, the clear sight, and the comfort.

So she opened her satchel and took it out, fingering it tenderly as she called up the remembrance of the delicate sweetness that made so much of the true beauty and pleasantness of living. Under the soft, waving branches, where color and motion lingered, she could almost believe herself back on the old porch. Willard was on the step, Daisy in the hammock, she sitting beside Mrs. Bell reading from a book of poems, and glancing up now and then to meet the exquisite sympathy that answered.

It began: "My Dear Child." How near that brought her! And with this thrill she recalled a time when she had wished Mrs. Dayton her mother. Was she ungrateful, fickle?

There was a very sincere affection all down the first page, a clear understanding of the trial that had come in the young girl's life. But there was no uncertain sound. Her father had the right to her, since he had never relinquished it or ceased to provide for her. It would be hard to go away to a life that was unattractive, to leave behind all the friends that were never dearer to the heart than in the blossom time of girlhood. But it would not be forever. Journeys across the ocean were such easy undertakings nowadays. And there was a child's duty. The task might be given her for some special purpose that was to develop her character as well.

"Do you remember," she wrote, "how St. Paul had longed to go to Rome, that greatest city of the world at that time, and his own as well? Perhaps he had some wonderful dreams of what he might do there, when he had almost persuaded Felix to be a Christian. And then his startling adventures on the journey, his being saved from shipwreck, from the viper, and all the other dangers, and at last reaching Rome. What then? He was not called before Nero to preach another glowing sermon. For two whole years, with a guard over him, earning his own shelter, quietly living almost out of sight, a prisoner, yet not called upon to be a martyr, making no apparent headway, he still received all that came to him, since he

could not well go out, and wrote his epistles that the Churches at a distance were glad of then, that all the Christian world have rejoiced in since. Then a quiet, almost ignominious order for his release. Nero with his extravagant pleasures cared not to see his prisoner, and he was not even considered worthy of martyrdom at that time. But was it waste time? The lessons of patience and resignation God had set before him, because in it there was some lesson to learn.

"And so in this there is some lesson to learn, perhaps that of daughterly regard, seed sown now on a not very promising ground, perhaps ground that all these years has been drying up for lack of sweet, warm, human sympathy; but God can soften it. It is hard to take it up bravely, but I think you have a strength in your nature that will help, and God's love will sustain your earnest endeavor. It may be set for you to win his love. When one is reaching after some duty with singleness of heart, never fear but God will light the way."

There was much more, sweet, consoling, tender. Helen wiped many tears from her eyes. She did not think she should ever wish from her heart to go, but she could do the duty set before her.

Another line or two seemed to make it more imperative. "If your father were intemperate, or a man of low proclivities, I should shrink from offering this advice; but it seems that he is held in high esteem in certain intellectual fields, and there is nothing against his moral character."

It was only the hardness and coldness, the living in far-back ages, holding in light esteem the warmth and tenderness of humanity. Could she ever rouse the divine spark? She knew now her mother had never been able to, and yet she hardly wondered at it.

It was her duty to go. How curious that in her life there should be the two sides, the opposing influences. How she had shrunk from Aunt Jane's plans when the shoe shop loomed up before her, and the something else had come. She almost smiled now, and, wiping her eyes for the last time, she rose resolutely after putting away her letter, and walked out to the main road, the squirrels she had scarcely noted before chattering and running to and fro, as if she had somehow been in their way.

The farms were growing somewhat larger, the houses were faded and shabby. Oh, why could not people care a little about them? Corn was stacked in shocks; here and there a woman and some children were husking. Meadows were being plowed up, the late apples picked, the late potatoes dug, and here and there the cows were lazily enjoying the sunshine.

She had to smile over the schoolhouse up the lane. That had been painted afresh. There was a sudden outburst of children, the dwellers near by who could go home to dinner. Was it as late as that? She quickened her pace a little. In spite of what lay before her, her spirits rose, now that she had decided for the last time where her duty lay. The world was full of beauty-it could not be altogether shut out even in London. To be strong and helpful, to keep the great point in view and not let discouragements press too heavily. For she had an objective point; she was young and she could give away a few years in this endeavor, this duty. It suddenly had a new face to her, a clear shining, like the stars that come out crisp and glowing on a wintry night.

Sophy was shaking the table-cloth out of the kitchen door, dragging it on the step. "Oh, Mis' Northrup!" she cried.

"What is the matter?" The whirr of the sewing machine stopped.

"Your—your cousin—"

Jenny came out. "Well, I do declare! Like mother, I began to think you had given us the go by. Have you been over there? No? And walked all the way from Mrs. Dayton's? What did possess you? Sit down, you must be tired to death. And you haven't had a mouthful of dinner? We have ours at twelve, for Joe takes breakfast early. Sophy, get out something for Helen. There hasn't anything happened?" studying her sharply.

"Oh, no. I wanted a good, long walk. Father and Mr. Walters went to the city this morning, and I have a holiday. I've been very busy reading to him and writing for him. And it was such a splendid day."

"Yes. There's a storm brewing, I think. Lay off your hat, though I hope you don't imagine you need wait for an invitation in this house."

[&]quot;Oh, no," laughed Helen.

"Shall I wet down some tea?" demanded Sophy.

"No," answered Helen; "a glass of milk

will suit me better."

"Haven't you heard Sophy's grandmother talk of wetting down tea?" and Jenny laughed. "Some sayings do run in families. Be spry, Sophy. Slice up that cold chicken, for you must be starved. What did make you walk?"

"Because I had no fine horse and chaise, and

I didn't see any going my way."

"Now I'll bring out this gathering and sit by you. I put Joe to sleep as soon as he gets his dinner, and he takes a good, long nap. I'm doing a lot of sewing for the Chapmans. Strange how people let themselves get out of everything, and don't seem to have a bit of management. However, I needn't grumble. Their shiftlessness is my gain. No one would believe the dollars I earn sewing for folks. What is the news over to Hope?"

"News?" Helen glanced up in a dubious fashion.

"You never were any hand for news. Now I even like to hear who has a new gown. I look round in church on Sunday. It's been so warm folks are wearing their summer

clothes yet. But we heard—is it true, Helen—that your father is going to take you over to England with him?"

"That is his plan," was the grave answer.

"Well, you do have the luck—that is, if it doesn't fall through as it did before. And I suppose you are in high feather?"

- "I would rather stay here, in my own land."
- "And go back to that school?"
- "Yes. I should like that best of all."
- "Well, you are queer! Though if you mean to teach I suppose you have to study. But it seems like wasting a good deal of time to get ready. We never supposed your father would turn out to be a sort of great man. Joe read something about it in the papers, and said it was one of the countries told about in the Bible, and a king who lived in Abraham's time. My, what a long piece back! But they were all dead and gone long ago. I'd rather live now."

"I am sure I would," said Helen earnestly.

How good the dinner tasted! And the

pumpkin pie came up to Joanna's.

Then they went out to the sitting room, where the machine stood, and in the corner was a pile of white muslin garments. Jenny

talked and sewed, but the whirr of the machine drowned half of it. How well they were getting along; what a manager Joe was; how good the crops had been; how generally prosperous everything was with them.

How happy and satisfied she was in her way, how content with the present, and yet earnest about the future. Was it a low level when it brought about such cheerful living, such readiness to work for what she wanted? Truly there was more than one kind of satisfaction in the world.

Some time after little Joe woke up, she put her sewing away, harnessed up the horse with Sophy's help, and they took a delightful drive, stopping on the homeward way to call at "father's" a moment. Aunt Jane was tired and worried. She had been pickling and preserving, and she wished she could find time to go gadding round of an afternoon.

"It's all easy enough when you have one child," she said. "Wait until you get a house full."

"I shan't wait," laughed Jenny. "I shall take some of my good times now."

CHAPTER X

THE LIGHT IN THE SHADOW

It was really pleasant to sit out on the porch in the evening and talk to Joe Northrup, who had a little wider outlook than his wife. Two belated katydids with hoarse voices were answering each other. He was interested in the stars. Some of them he knew very well, and they found others with their wonderful stories. Helen was pleased that she had something to give, and Joe's shrewd, half-humorous remarks amused her and lightened her heart.

"I hope we shall see you again before you go away," he said with hearty cordiality the next morning. "I can't get used to thinking you belong to anybody but Father Jason."

She wondered as she was on her way to Aunt Jane's whether, if she had been the ordinary country girl, her father would have wanted to take her away with him? Oh, that was questioning his regard that she must pray now might ripen into affection. For, since

she had resolved, she must not waver in her endeavors.

She went over to Aunt Jane's, who was not so tired now and in a much pleasanter mood with her large array of jars and cans in their places on the shelves. And after Helen had talked a little while she said with winsome cheerfulness:

"Aunt Jane, isn't there some sewing I can do for you?"

"There's lots of mending. Jenny's real good about sewing, and she's such a swifter! But the mending does get behind. 'Reely's so slow about everything. Those two girls are no more alike than chalk and cheese. I sometimes think 'Reely can't belong to me. There's a pile of stockings, but you didn't used to love to darn."

"I have made myself ready to do whatever comes in the way," with the light of a smile shining in her eyes.

"Well, now, that's sensible. And there is a great peach-basket full. If you would darn some of them."

She didn't mind little holes and fine materials, but these were quite dreadful. She picked out the best ones first, little Fan's and

Aunt Jane's. She had strict injunctions not to mend any of 'Reely's.

"And some of the oldest are hardly worth anything. I take them for patches to mend Tom's knees, and sometimes just put a new heel in Nat's. He does gnaw them out so. You couldn't help me in a better way, Helen," and the tone softened.

"Do you really think you will go away?" she asked presently.

"I—I suppose so. Father thought he would get ready to sail early in December."

"I wouldn't cross the ocean in the winter for a fortune. You'll both go to the bottom. Uncle Jason don't approve of it at all. He told your father so. As if there wasn't enough chances for education here;" and her face settled in indignant lines.

"I do a good deal of writing for father."

"Well, it will 'most break Uncle Jason's heart. He's dreadfully set against it."

Helen winked hard to keep the tears from her eyes.

"Seems so sort of queer, his coming back. I don't see why he mightn't as well have stayed. An' Mis' Dayton couldn't get off this fall. How did she like that?"

"Two of her cousins that she visited went out West. She may go about the

holidays."

"Well, she doesn't have a hard life now, though it wasn't easy through Mr. Dayton's long sickness. Folks do say there's no need of her keeping boarders, but smart people don't like to sit down and fold their hands. I get mighty tired of it myself sometimes of a Sunday afternoon."

There was the diversion of dinner, and the children as well as Uncle Jason were over-joyed to see her. Afterward Nat coaxed her out to inspect some of the new stock and the poultry house he and father had been building. She took such a warm interest in it all.

"It's so nice to have some one to talk to who knows a thing or two and doesn't throw cold water on your plans. Sam now insists farming is going by the board except on the big ranches out West. But if Joe Northrup can make money I don't see why we can't. Father takes quite kindly to some improvements, but mother wants everything kept in the old rut. I'm in for some of the new ways myself, and I don't mean to ruin father, either. He's a good man, father is."

The boy's face had an eager flush and his eyes were shining with emotion.

"Oh, Nat, I am so glad you have come to love him in real earnest! He is tender and kind and generous, and you can't have a better friend," Helen said with a certain pride.

"I'm so glad you haven't gone back on him, for all your fine schooling. We did suppose that queer, rich old woman would sort of draw you from us. You're different from us, somehow, but you are not too proud to love father, and I honor you for that. He's all broken up over your going away, for he is afraid your father will never let you come back. And I'm sorry enough too, just as we're getting to be friends. You see, I shouldn't mind asking you about matters that puzzle me a bit, and I sometimes wish there was a big farm school to go to, but then father couldn't really spare me."

"There are agricultural colleges," her eyes suffusing with a kind of admiration for the

big boy.

"As I said, I couldn't go, but it would be a splendid thing! Oh, I wonder what you will do in England?"

"Study and write some for father and read to him," she replied rather hesitatingly.

"Don't you feel half afraid of him?"

She shivered a little, then overcame it with a great effort. She would not swerve from the straight line.

"I have known him only such a little while," she made answer. "It isn't as if one had lived all one's life with a father."

"Well, I hope he will be good to you. But we all wish he had not come back."

She felt immeasurably sorry that he should not have won a cordial welcome somewhere. He did not care for it, she knew. He thought lightly of the opinion of those around him. They were not of his kind.

Helen had meant to go back, but they coaxed her to stay all night. She helped 'Reely with the dishes and tidied up the kitchen so deftly that the younger girl stood amazed.

"I shouldn't think you would like to do it, Helen, when you are not compelled to, when you are—company," she said in a surprised sort of tone.

"Don't you like me to help you?" There was a mirthful light in Helen's eyes.

"Oh, yes, it's awfully good of you. And to darn so many of the stockings. I hate to darn stockings. And it seems as if mother always pokes at me the things that I hate to do worst of all."

"What do you love to do?"

There was a merry archness in every line of the smiling face.

"Well, to ramble through the woods and just dream how nice it would be if you were rich and didn't have to work. My! the books I'd read. I like love stories about rich girls and their going to parties and dancing and having lovers. And, Helen, I mean to get married just as soon as I have a lover. Mother says I shan't until I am a good housekeeper. But I mean to keep a servant like Jenny, only you won't catch me sewing for the neighbors. Aren't you going to be married, Helen?"

Helen flushed with a curious sense of newness to have the question applied to her. Of course, the older girls at school had discussed it.

"I haven't thought of that. There seems so much to learn first."

"But if I went to London I should look out for a lord and marry him. I have two or three such lovely stories where lords did marry real poor girls. Now and then I do manage to smuggle in a book. I used to take

them down in the lot when I went to pick berries, and I hide them around in different places under the floor up in the garret."

Helen remembered when she had gone up in the old garret to read. But those were marvelous tales of adventure and discoveries, and heroes who had suffered almost incredible hardships. Some of them were her heroes still.

"Lords as a general thing do not marry poor girls," she said rather dryly. "They want education and refinement and cultivation. And you wouldn't be likely to meet with one here in Hope."

"Oh, no. But you might. And you have all these things. Still, I've made up my mind to marry as soon as I can, and he shan't have any mother to nag round."

"You had better learn to be a good house-keeper, and so get ready."

"Helen," said Uncle Jason, "come out on the stoop. It's almost like a summer night. We shan't have much more of such weather. You, too, 'Reely."

"I'm going to bed, I'm dead tired," Aurelia answered shortly.

Poor 'Reely! Certainly Aunt Jane's method

had failed here. She would pore over her novel until she heard them stir about the house, then she would put out her candle and be soundly asleep as soon as any one came up. She could even outwit her mother on the burning of the candle.

Aunt Jane was rested and in a pleasantly discursive mood about neighbors and cousins who had been married. Nat was finding various stars and asking Helen about them. Uncle Jason simply held her hand; it was a delight for him to have her there.

They did not take her home until after supper the next night, and they made her promise to come again before she went away. What charm had there been about this visit? There were numberless things she did not like, but they had not fretted her. Was it because she had tried to help and cheer, and not thought of herself or what she liked best? Was it because she had accepted the life that had been mapped out for her like the brave old prisoner of Rome, and had resolved to fret no more against it? If this was the path God had laid out for her, let her walk carefully, cheerfully, pushing aside the thorns and briars rather than trampling them down and wounding tired feet.

"You must have had a good time!" exclaimed Mrs. Dayton, when the smiling face reached up for a kiss.

"I did. Every one was so glad to see me, and so sorry to think of my going away. I didn't suppose they would ever come to care so much about me. And Jenny's little boy is so cunning and sweet."

"The Northrups are stirring people. I don't see why folks should drop down and get into such shiftless ways as they have over there," nodding her head. "Some one said Joe would own half of Hope Center if he lived to be fifty years old."

Helen laughed at that. "And he isn't always fretting and driving about and worrying lest things won't be done on time. He's almost

as easy as Uncle Jason."

"And his mother was one of those powerful fretters, who always lived over a week or two back, and a week or two ahead, and never seemed to get in the middle of the pasture. I suppose Joe did get desperately tired of it."

"And Jenny is so good-natured, but she isn't a bit dawdling. They are very happy."

Did it matter so much, since they were suited, whether they were reaching up to a high intellectual atmosphere? No, it was not education alone that made people happy. She liked the study, the knowledge, the wide outlook, the keeping in touch with daily events, and oh! she *did* love people who were congenial. Yet now she began to understand that you could find points of sympathy and agreement with those who did not touch your inmost heart.

Helen felt like a bird set suddenly free. She spent all the next day in the Library with Miss Westerly. When she was not waiting on patrons they had interesting talks on various subjects. Then she hunted up books of poems and fairly reveled in them. She had a quick memory for the lines that seemed to sing themselves in her brain, and she had a presentiment that she ought to store up treasures against the days of dearth, and silence, and perhaps pain.

Then late in the afternoon she went to Mrs. Wilmarth's. It had blown up cloudy, with a kind of angry northeast wind, and dust and leaves went scurrying along the sidewalks. All this had happened while she had been drowsing in the enchanted realms of poesy.

There was the bright fire for greeting and

an invalid in a soft red gown with clouds of lace about it. She held out such a thin, white hand.

"Oh, you have been ill!" Helen exclaimed with quick solicitude.

"Yes. I have had two very bad days, the worst attack I have had in a long while. I watched so for you yesterday. Were you deep in Greek and Aryan philosophy?"

"No, I was having a holiday."

"Sit down here and tell me all about it. The ottoman will hold you and my feet. How bright your eyes are, and the roses on your cheeks ought to be fragrant."

They both laughed at that. Helen slipped down and took the thin hands in hers, so plump and warm and invigorating in their touch.

"Now, start at the very beginning and give a good, cheerful account of yourself. Some great doctor said once of a patient, 'she was dying for a good gossip.' I'm sorry the word has been twisted to mean 'envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness,' for it seems such a pleasant, firelight sort of a thing when it is bright and cheery. For three days I have seen no one but the doctor and Mr. Wilmarth.'

Helen did begin at the outset, going to the station with her father. "He has a depressing sort of influence over her," the lady thought. "She is her natural self without him."

She saw so many bright things now, the fun and mischief that had cropped out in the baby, the bits of homely wit Cousin Jenny had used, the visit at Aunt Jane's and its varied pleasures. Even the stocking darning was not forgotten. Nat, and bright little Fan, and Aurelia, so disgusted with work when it was likely to be her portion, and she had no ambition for anything higher. Then the lovely day in the Library, with this and that little snatch of poetry, and all the out-of-doors, the blueness of the sky, the changeful tinges of color, the wonderful richness of the autumn that had suddenly gone under a cloud, but you knew that "behind the cloud the sun was still shining" somewhere.

Mrs. Wilmarth's eyes brightened and a soft flush just wavered over her wan cheeks. What a curious, revivifying blessedness this girl infused into everything!

The hall door opened. "I've been detained on some troublesome business, and felt so

anxious—oh, you have Miss Grant," and Mr. Wilmarth nodded, bending over to kiss his wife.

"Yes. I've hardly noted the time. She has been the best medicine I have had yet, and I feel almost well. I am going out to the table."

Helen sprang up. "Is it as late as that?

I must run home."

"It is as late as that, and you have no doubt lost your dinner at home," and the man's voice was full of amusement. "Besides, it begins to rain, and I should have to see you home because I have only one good umbrella. And I am starved for my dinner! I couldn't possibly walk so far unless I was stayed with—what is it to-night?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Helen, with a flush,

mostly pleasure.

"I'll be ready in a moment, and I'll just say we have a guest."

When he returned he escorted them out to the dining room. Everything was simply pretty, but dainty and delicate.

"It is good to have you here once more," said Mr. Wilmarth to his wife. "And it is really delightful to have a guest."

Helen enjoyed it very much as well. Hope

people were not of the highly cultivated sort, save now and then as some one a little above the level drifted in. Mr. Wilmarth was intelligent without any air of superiority. But he knew that his wife sometimes sighed for the friends they had left behind in their old home.

He rehearsed some of the happenings of the news gleaned from the paper, the pleasant weather there had been of late, what a splendid autumn it had been for fruit, and what pictures the apple trees had made of themselves. She enjoyed the everyday-ness of it, and Mrs. Wilmarth's smiles, though she could see that her hostess was getting very tired.

This side of the house, the sitting room that fronted the east and opened into the roomy hall on the south, was taking the storm fiercely. The wind blew in terrific gusts, and sent great sheets of rain against the lattice of the porch, and even found its way to the windows.

"Oh, dear!" Helen looked appalled.

"Now, I will tell you what we will do," Mr. Wilmarth began in a convincing tone. "Mat will be going home in a few moments, and we will send word to Mrs. Dayton that you will remain all night. For you might be swept away in this deluge."

She looked at Mrs. Wilmarth, but one glance at the beseeching eyes conquered all the hesitation and the strangeness.

"Yes," the lady said, without any effusion of manner. "That is the only sensible thing to do, and we shall be most glad to have you accept our hospitality. I think Mrs. Dayton will pardon me," smiling with a certainty Helen could not resist.

"You are very kind, and I do prefer this to the storm," returning smile for smile with a fresh young grace.

"And you have not played for me. Mr. Wilmarth is very fond of music. I think he fell in love with me because my music suited him, and now I cannot always play," regretfully.

Helen thought there were many other things a man might adore. Her soft, cultured voice, out of which she kept the sound of pain, her light, waving hair that was more brown than gold, and grew so beautifully at the temples and the edge of the forehead, her pathetic eyes, and the grace of her motions.

The piano was in the parlor. There was no fascinating grate fire, but in a little while it was nice and warm, and there was a roomy

sofa where Mr. Wilmarth surrounded his wife with soft, dainty cushions. They could not hear the wild gusts of wind here. So Helen played some of the melodies that seemed to bring Miss Craven before her; chords of exquisite tenderness rather than florid strains springing from key to key.

"And you sing, too?"

"She has been learning some old-fashioned songs for me," said Mrs. Wilmarth.

"I haven't practiced much since I left school, only here. Mrs. Wilmarth has been so kind," glancing over with girlish graciousness. Then she began to turn the leaves of an almost tabooed music book. There was "Love Went a Maying," "Bonnie Doon," "Mary of Argyle," and Francillon's beautiful little verse:

"The night has a thousand eyes,
The day but one,
Yet the light of the whole world dies
At set of sun.

"The mind has a thousand eyes,
The heart but one,
Yet the life of the whole heart dies
When love is done."

"I am afraid I am tiring you," and Helen turned around to the sofa. "And you must have tired yourself."

"Oh, I don't tire easily, especially when it is about the things I love," she answered

brightly.

"I think we will go out and look at the fire a while," said Mr. Wilmarth, "and listen to the spiteful wind that fights and quarrels out of doors. It sometimes suggests two armies trying strength for the ascendancy. And then when you think of the sweet south wind from the bank of violets, you wonder what relation they can be."

He led his wife out carefully and placed her in her chair, and they had a talk about music and the grand oratorios they had heard in their younger years. Helen was delighted. It was different from the Bells, yet quite as harmonious and fascinating to the girl, for love was the keynote.

"You have given us a great deal of pleasure this evening, Miss Grant," Mr. Wilmarth said as they were retiring. "I hardly know how to thank you."

"It has been a great pleasure to me as well," and her eyes were shining with unmistakable gladness.

"Ah, you are young to have learned that

one of the finest satisfactions of life is to give pleasure. It often comes back twofold."

What a lovely evening it had been, Helen thought as she shut the door of the pretty room. Once it had seemed possible for her to have many of these delights, but in a little while she must learn to do without them. She had hardly thought music could be such a solace. Oh, how bare and dreary that student life looked when shorn of most of its charming accessories!

It rained the next morning, but not in such fitful gusts. There were broken branches and wrecked trellises and washed-out places in the streets. They had a cozy breakfast. Mrs. Wilmarth was ever so much better.

"Miss Helen, I think you would make a good doctor, or, better still, a nurse. Did any one ever tell you how magnetic you were?" asked her hostess.

"I fancy it would only be with certain people." Her glance assured Mrs. Wilmarth she was among the favored number.

"That is not altogether well understood," said the gentleman. "There are antagonistic natures, there are people who ought never to

try a friendship, and you even find in families where all should be harmony some fatal difference that is never wholly overcome. I suppose, to the nurse, a patient is simply a case at which she is to do her best. They do get most of their private preferences trained out, I think. I shouldn't even advise you to study medicine;" and he smiled at the face of interest turned upon him.

"Oh, I couldn't!" and Helen gave a sort of shudder. "And I might entertain better than I could nurse."

It was a charming day indoors, and by noon the rain ceased, though the clouds were lowering and the wind sullen. But the two found so many things to talk about. Mrs. Wilmarth related bits of her own girlhood. She had been at boarding school and made many enthusiastic friends, who had dropped out, and some she had outgrown, she confessed. There were pretty gifts to look over, some lovely jewels her husband had given her, keepsakes from her mother, dead long ago.

"And now I would like a daughter to wear them, for I shall never go out very much again. I wish—why, Helen, I could have been your mother! I have been married eighteen years. Miss Westerly told me about the lady who took such a fancy to you, and I felt so sorry that she had to die just when you might have been a comfort and pleasure to her."

"Oh!" Helen cried, deeply moved, her eyes filling with tears; "thank you for the sympathy with her. Though when she first took to me I wasn't as much worth caring about."

"I think you must always have been worth caring about, or it couldn't have happened. And I am sorry your father is going to take you away when we have just begun an interesting acquaintance. I like young girls so much, but I do not seem to find the kind I enjoy. Perhaps I am too exigent. I dislike flippancy and that air of smartness, as if there was nothing left to learn. And then this despising the pretty old ways of other times and pushing the elders aside—oh, I am afraid I am old-fashioned."

"You are very sweet," Helen said with honest eyes. "I am just finding how dear people can be."

"Count me among them. Oh, you must

come in often while you do stay."

She promised. She should be very glad to.

But oh, how much harder it was going to make the parting!

When the walks dried up in the afternoon she said she must go home, and withstood the tender entreaties.

CHAPTER XI

STANDING AT THE DOOR

"Well, truant, come and give an account of yourself!" said Mr. Warfield, standing on the porch as Helen walked up the path. "I thought I should have to come and see if you had been swept away in the deluge. How it did rain!"

"I have had just a lovely time."

"And the Greek and Latin? And what your father will say to-morrow?" rather severely.

"It won't take back my good time," laughing.

"But it may give you a rather bad time."

"I'm not going out to meet trouble. No doubt there will be study enough in the years to come. And all these delights will be something to look back at when I am in gray ruins."

Then she passed him and went in. Mrs. Dayton was all eagerness to hear what had happened to her.

"I'm glad you had the nice time. Oh, Helen, whatever shall we all do when you go away? For when you are at school we can count on the months to vacation. And I'm afraid you will get to liking it and stay on and on, perhaps marry some dry old professor."

"I have a feeling that I shall never marry at all." The fair face had a lovely seriousness.

"Oh, numbers of girls think that way. And the others are very sure they will. I've noticed the first class generally marry the soonest."

They both laughed at that.

In the mail at noon there was a brief note for Helen from her father. He had been consulting an oculist about his eyes and meant to take the treatment another week. The Reverend Mr. Walters he had found of great assistance in making notes for him. He hoped Helen would apply to Mr. Warfield if she could not get along, but he wished her to make rapid progress.

The young girl drew a long breath of reprieve.

"I do wonder if I was really meant for a student," she said to herself as she had times

before. "I like companionship. I wish I could go off on a journey, but not to Rome. No, I do not want to go to Rome nor to London just now. And oh, how glad I should have been to go with Mrs. Van Dorn! I shall have to work very hard to get myself on the right track and make duty a pleasure."

She did take up her work honestly and earnestly the next week. She picked out knotty points, she wrote exercises, she copied out notes so that she should keep in touch with her father's queer chirography. So many hours, and then she took the freedom of a bird, went for long, rapid walks, made calls, spent evenings with the Wilmarths. Had she ever loved music and poetry and all the blandishments, as her father would call them, so well? And she was ashamed and startled at herself that she should care so much for love and friendship. Everybody grew dearer to her as she thought of the years to come that she must do without them. And she could confess to no one her sorrow save her first outburst to Mrs. Bell, and that had been only skimming over the surface. Mrs. Wilmarth might understand-but it would not be just to her father. It was not as if he had any glaring fault, or was cruel in any way, it was his fatal inability to understand a girl. If she were older, had outgrown enthusiasm and youthful longings and the delight of pure joyousness! She could be so light-hearted that she—yes, she did hate to carry about a heavy heart. Could one help it when all the sunshine and joy were shut out?

Another week elapsed before Professor Grant returned. It was Saturday noon. She had been dusting all the rooms and giving the window-panes a polish, and was bright-eyed and rosy enough for a Hebe. Mr. Warfield came walking up the path with him. She had affronted that gentleman two hours before because she would not go over some Latin verses with him, and he had gone off in a very dignified manner.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Oh, father!" and held out her warm, red hand where the blood was rushing through every vein with the exercise.

His was so cold even through his glove that it chilled her. He looked very pale, she thought, but the wind and the sun had given Mr. Warfield a fine color, and it might be in part owing to the contrast.

Mr. Warfield handed the bundle of papers to Helen.

"I think I will go straight upstairs," said the professor. "I'll have a cup of tea and a slice of toast——"

Mrs. Dayton came out just then and greeted him cordially. "Luncheon is all ready," she announced.

"I am a little fatigued, and rest will be more satisfactory. Helen, bring me the tea, please." And he went on his way.

"He gets worn out when he goes to the city," Mrs. Dayton remarked to Helen. "He looks poorly."

Helen took up the tea and toast. He had changed his coat for his gray study gown, and that made him appear more wan and colorless.

He nodded his thanks and began to sip the tea.

"Are you quite well?" she ventured.

"Yes. A little tired. I was up late last night at a meeting, and I have been pretty busy," and with an imperious wave of the hand he dismissed her.

Somehow she didn't want any luncheon, and yet she was usually hungry when meal time came.

"He struck me as being rather feeble," Mr. Warfield said in answer to a remark that had gone before. Then Mrs. Dayton spoke of something else, and Mr. Conway had a little incident to relate.

Helen hurried upstairs presently. He had emptied his cup but had not touched his toast, and had fallen asleep. So she did not disturb him, but took a book and sat down by the window. November had come in rather gray and chilly. She was trying to recall the brightness of an hour ago, when the sky was just as sullen and the day as sad, only, she was rushing around bright and gay, helping some one, and singing a merry song, or at least snatches of it.

"I must be really wicked and selfish," she mused. "The things I like to do are a joy to me, and the things I don't like—perhaps that is the true test of character, of strength, of real purpose to life. Does God give one grace to overcome all this? The world would have lost in all likelihood if St. Paul had not been a prisoner at Rome. But what will it lose if I should not spend years deciphering old tablets, studying things that only high-up scholars care for? And if I came to freedom I should

thrust it all behind me. I never can throw my whole heart and soul into it."

Her father gave a long sigh and his head drooped a little. Oh, how thin and pale he was! There are knowledges that ripen in one's mind suddenly, just as a seed sprouts, and this one was sown by Mrs. Bell's letter. There was the duty. No matter just what had happened, she saw now how easily her father could let her slip out of his mind when he had never cared much for women or girls. But the sting was that he did not care for her now in any loving sense, it was because she might be useful to him. If she had been another kind of girl—still her duty was toward him, that was plain.

He started suddenly and looked about with a rather wild expression in his eyes.

"Oh," he said. "I have had such a refreshing nap. I have not slept very well of late. Helen, could you get me some fresh toast and another cup of tea?"

"Oh, yes." And she rose with a faint smile hovering about her lips as she glanced at him. She would begin at once.

Joanna insisted on making the toast, and it was a most delicious brown. The tea was

boiling hot so that it shouldn't cool too soon.

He appeared to enjoy both very much.

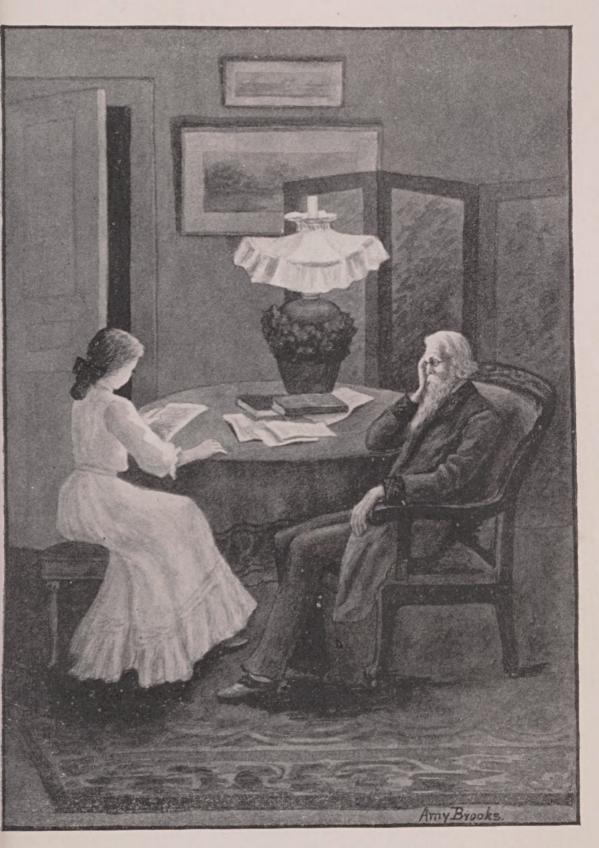
"I did a good deal while I was in New York," he began in an explanatory manner. "I had a good guide who was very much interested, and in some points open to conviction. Most clergymen are narrow, they look only on one side, but for a man who has lived most of his life in a little country town, Mr. Walters is really intelligent. And then, as I shall never return to America, perhaps it is as well to take away with me as good an opinion as possible."

"I am glad you found Mr. Walters so companionable," Helen said heartily.

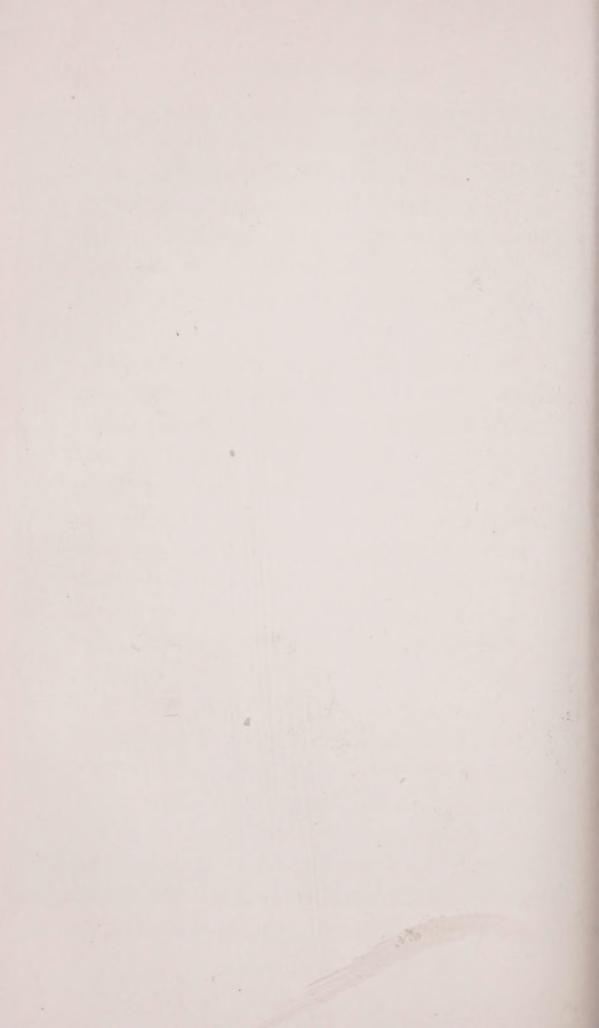
"He has quite a desire to go over to London. But I shall drop right back to my work, and have little time to entertain any one. If he were twenty years younger now, it might do. He could entertain himself then."

Helen stood by the table, and she had the excellent faculty of standing still without fidgeting.

"You may set those aside and bring that parcel. Cut the cord and turn the papers over—so. Now take out all those that are marked A. I feel so invigorated that we might do



"Read the sentences aloud, and I will criticise." - Page 223.



a little work. Lay the rest of those in that drawer—carefully, so as not to disturb them."

She did as she was bidden with an ease and quietude of motion that would not have disturbed an invalid.

"That is for my new article. Read the sentences aloud, and I will criticise. Copy whatever corrections I suggest."

She could not help but blunder a little in the reading. He had quoted from the Latin, and a few Aramaic words had slipped in. It began to grow dusky presently, and he asked her to light the lamp. Then she stirred up the fire, for he complained of being chilly, while she thought she would like to have a window open. However, she read on until the dinnerbell rang.

"If there is soup, send me up some. And chicken or a bit of rare beef. If not, never mind."

She ran out on the porch and took two or three swift turns up and down, drawing long, refreshing breaths, before she went in to dinner. Afterward there were several callers.

"What kept you so long?" he asked irritably. He had gone to bed now. "I wanted to get that section A all right, so you could

copy it out on Monday. I shall have to be a little careful of my eyes for a while. It won't do for me to have trouble with them. Read something. I'm not sleepy."

If it could only be a poem of her own choosing!

"Let me see how you progress in Latin. Get Horace."

She was not especially fond of Horace. She liked Theocritus much better. And, somehow, the room was close and her nerves were tired.

"Your accent is execrable, Helen. You rasp my very soul. There, shut up the book and go downstairs. Let the window down just a little way from the top, and put the screen here beside the bed."

"Good-night," she said gently, though her heart was in a tumult.

He merely mumbled a reply.

She stood by the window in the hall trying to recover a kind of mental equilibrium. Purple-gray clouds were chasing each other through the sky, driven by sharp north winds. Here and there in a rift a star shone out a moment or two. It cheered her to remember they were always there, that back of this scurrying,

headlong mass, like two fierce armies in a fight, there was order and beauty and strength that never failed, and that the tempest was evanescent, that nature's great serenity was a part of the mighty power behind it all. If she could only believe that in the end the stars would shine out, and the troubles of her life disperse in God's good time.

She counted up her own time. In five years she would be twenty-one, free to go wherever she listed, capable of earning her own living. But if that should not be God's time? If she were to be a prisoner longer than that? If her father's eyesight should fail? There was blind Milton and his daughters, and, if report spoke truly, this man who could look so deeply into God's purposes could not always resign himself to God's will.

"But I don't have to live five years ahead." And she smiled as she went out to the kitchen, where Mrs. Dayton and Joanna were holding a conference. She did not even want to talk to Mr. Warfield. She would have liked the pretty sitting room at the Wilmarths'.

Sunday she had always kept for her day. It had been delightfully observed at school and never made wearisome. Mr. Walters came over in the afternoon and had a long talk with her father. He had a vague idea that a man who had searched so deeply through the olden ages and proved so many Bible facts must eventually be led to see God's truth in his dealings with his chosen people. He liked the wide scholarship.

But Helen began again with the first of the week. A weaker girl might have been utterly worn out by the fine criticisms and exact meanings that she really could not discern, the conjectures that were chased to their lair and flouted, the traditions shattered with an unsparing hand. She had to check her weariness, her impatience over these minute searchings. She copied and recopied, read and reread, studied her Greek and systems of philosophy and religion until her brain was in a whirl.

The days were much shorter, and now she took her recess-time between the two lights. Mr. Warfield waylaid her and insisted upon a brisk walk, but sometimes she evaded him and ran down to the Wilmarths and had a delightful hour talking or playing. But she would not stop to dinner. It would be harder to give up the beguiling evening when it was spread

out before her with entrancing firelight and lovelight as well. For she knew Mrs. Wilmarth had come to have a very fervent affection for her.

"I suppose you wouldn't want to give up Mrs. Dayton, who has been so good to you, but if you were not going away I should want you part of the time. I should like to persuade myself that you were my niece, an orphan confided to my care. Oh, wouldn't that be really delightful!"

Mrs. Wilmarth had quite recovered from her attack, though she was still an invalid. She looked up eagerly.

How odd that there should be two friends almost rivals again.

"You are so generous in your friendship," Helen returned, deeply moved. "I wish I might stay. I have no drawing toward London just now. If I were older it might seem different. I am foolish, perhaps, but I long for a real girl's life. I liked it so at school. But since the way has been pointed out to me, I must take it. Oh, Mrs. Wilmarth, do you think these things, duties, come direct from God? Yet I suppose this must, or I shouldn't have been Professor Grant's daughter."

They both sighed and clasped hands.

Then there were visits out to the farm, Uncle Jason taking her on Saturday and some of them bringing her back on Monday. Her father fretted a little over this. He was getting very used to her ministrations, and found them soothing. His eyes did not improve as rapidly as the oculist had prophesied, and it gave him a pang of apprehension. He had so much yet to do in his life. He had become quite an expert in reading the old tablets that had been very trying, and one reason why he had been the more easily persuaded to take this journey was that the rest and change might prove beneficial to the tired and strained organs. They had appeared much stronger at first.

He had never appealed to any one's pity or sympathy; it seemed to him a sign of weakness, and he could not believe the eye trouble would be serious. Helen felt she would not dare suggest it, but it did make her more attentive, more anxious to please, and ready to work. She had set before her a resolute aim, to win her father's regard, but she knew it would be slow work. He did despise sentimentalism. And he was waiting until he had

her altogether under his control to lop off these foolish little tendrils that wanted to twine around something and gather a fanciful sweetness in return.

At last the article was finished and sent on its way. He had promised some notes to an archæological society, and was in correspondence with two or three Oriental scholars. And now he began to plan for his return. It filled Helen with dismay.

Dr. Bradford dropped in now and then. November proved a most unpleasant month, with cloudy skies, high winds, and several severe storms.

"It will not do for you to cross in any such weather as this, and I believe still worse storms are predicted for early December," said the doctor.

"As if a big steamer was not safe in a storm," with an intonation of contempt.

"It isn't so much the safety—one seldom hears of a wreck, but it is the being tumbled about and perhaps made ill. Were you sick coming over?"

"A little—yes," rather faintly. "But as a general thing I am a good traveler, or have been."

"I do not think you are quite up to the mark."

"Nonsense!" testily. "I may not be so robust-looking, but I've never had a real illness in my life. That slight fever in the fall was nothing."

A queer little smile crossed the doctor's face.

"You've never gone past middle life before. And I have an idea you've worn rather hard on yourself. Then a rough passage might keep your daughter ill all the way over, which would be a great care for you."

"She doesn't look like a girl who would be seasick."

"That kind often take it very hard."

Professor Grant frowned. He couldn't recall that Helen had complained of a headache but once or twice.

"Wait a while and see how the weather pans out."

Then the doctor called in at the old clergy-man's.

"If you have the least influence over Professor Grant, try to keep him until there's some kind of settled weather. He isn't fit for a sea voyage himself, and, if anything happened, think of that poor girl all alone. She is brave

enough and has a level head, but it would be an awful shock to her. I wish he'd stay until spring. And everybody thinks it a shame that he should take her over there, away from all her friends."

"It seems to me he is not real strong," commented the clergyman hesitatingly.

"Strong! Some day he will go out like that!" snapping thumb and finger. "He has worn himself out."

All the weather-wise admitted that it was the worst November there had been in years. Helen used to run out in the high winds occasionally and fight a battle with herself. There were times that she said she could not go, almost, would not go. She battled with a human adversary as she was blown about.

This opposition made Professor Grant more irritable and a harder taskmaster. Helen belonged to him, he had the right to decide her life. She had the making of a fine scholar in her, a strong, intellectual woman, if her powers were not all frittered away on silly nothings. He had not gotten over his suspicion of the young student who had started her in Greek. And sometimes he was afraid Mr. Warfield considered he had a claim on her interest, her

future. No one should have that. Marriage was the destruction of student life, the momentary flash that left smoldering ashes in its wake.

And she was trying to impress some heavenborn truths on the arid heart. She was obedient, she never rebelled, although she sometimes showed a touch of spirit. One afternoon, when she was very weary and extremely disheartened by making mistakes, the correction of which seemed to her puerile quibbles, she said with a flush of indignation on her cheek and perhaps a little in her voice:

"I am afraid I shall be a disappointment to you, father. I think I am not meant for a high-up scholar, for a delver in the past and gone knowledges. I can see that they may have an interest to profound thinkers and searchers after the mysteries of the past. I am a very modern girl. I like modern people and all the wonderful discoveries and inventions of to-day, the kinship of nations—"

She made a little pause for her protest rather surprised herself, and he rejoined immediately:

"Do you think no one ever knew all these things before? Has any nation ever yet built a Sphinx," scornfully, "or a great pyramid?"

"But they have built cities and dotted the world with industries, and gone down to the sea in great ships and scattered learning and commerce and civilization and a broad humanity;" and her eyes were deep and fervent, her voice had a ring to it.

"They are most of them old things done over by a later generation. It is supposed now that some of the ancients circumnavigated the world, even. They built great and wonderful cities, they had temples and palaces that put to shame our modern ones. They were the founders of astronomical sciences, they understood architecture and sculpture, the cutting of hard stones and jewels so delicately that it must have been done with a magnifying glass. They had gold and silver and bronze, they made carpets and rugs and did all manner of exquisite embroidery and dyeing in richest colors.

"Wait until you see the copies of the palace of Sargon, at Khorsabad, with its noble flight of steps, its magnificent stone carvings, its enameled bricks, its walls of alabaster, and plates of gold. There is nothing like it now. The nearest approach to it is India, and much of that has been ruthlessly despoiled by modern vandalism."

His thin face was in a glow, his eyes shore with an intense enthusiasm, but he had to pause for breath and leaned back in his chair.

"And they were cruel, as well, and their punishment overtook them," she went on bravely. "They sacrificed thousands of human lives with no pity or mercy, and now all their grandeur is a heap of ruins. It does not stir me to enthusiasm, rather abhorrence. I shall never enjoy it. I am not formed for an Oriental scholar. I have the softer side of womanhood. I want companionship, friendship. I might want love some day. And so I say you may be disappointed in me, for I cannot promise to even attempt your standard. I will be an obedient daughter while-" She paused; she was going to say "while your authority lasts," and a sudden pang pierced her. If he should be blind would she not owe a more sacred duty?

He made a forbidding gesture with a wave of his hand. "You have been illy trained," he said. "I should have looked after you before, but it is not too late. You have the

making of a scholar, and a year or two of proper discipline will bring it out. There, go to your Greek. I do not enjoy such tempests of excitement."

Her face was scarlet, and there was a mutinous flash in her eyes. She went over to the window feeling as if she must defy him and take the right to her own life.

There was a silence of many minutes. She could hear her own heart beat in great rebellious throbs. The letters danced before her eyes and ran together.

"Helen!" he exclaimed rather impatiently, "come and see if you can make out this letter. I am glad you write decently, though it spoils one for such a scrawl as this."

The girl glanced at it in amaze. It seemed plain enough to her.

"Shall I read it?" She made a great effort to keep her voice calm. He seemed to have forgotten his vehemence.

"Yes, do. I can't make beginning nor end of it. Something about Washington."

It was a meeting of savants to be held in the capital, and two sessions were to be devoted to antiquarianism, Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian. Would Professor Grant kindly consent

to repeat the most interesting talk he had given the summer school earlier in the season, which was considered by eminent authority to be more replete with recent discoveries than anything that had yet been offered to the public? The committee would be very much pleased to entertain him, and there were more complimentary but not fulsome paragraphs.

She still stood by him with the letter in her hand, but her eyes were downcast.

"You see," he began presently, "there are people in the world who do not utterly despise the stamp of antiquity," and the touch of scorn in his voice cut her to the heart. She did not despise it, only she did not adore it as the greatest thing to her life. But she made no answer.

"The 19th," he continued reflectively.

"Dr. Bradford made such a fuss about the weather, but December seems coming in rather milder. I think we ought to sail by the first of the year. I will write and inquire about the steamer. And I must consider this. I have not seen Washington in years. It is, I believe, the greatest city this country boasts of. A hundred years old, hardly!" and he gave a sharp, satirical laugh.

"It is not old enough to be a ruin," she returned dryly.

"Well, I will consider. It is complimentary, to say the least. And I could talk—I would not read a paper. But that New York oculist knows next to nothing. I do not see that my eyes are any better for his treatment. There, you may go back to your task."

She felt a little braver now. But—a month! She knew Dr. Bradford had advised him not to go before spring, and she had hoped the journey would be delayed.

How dreary the lesson was to-day, and when she recited she blundered miserably.

The next noon Mr. Conway brought in two letters for her, both in a rather delicate hand, and her father felt annoyed, still more so when she went to her room to read them.

Daisy's letter was a jumble, and out of it all she gathered that she was to go home a few days before vacation, and that Annis was to be married at three on Christmas Day, have a reception after until five, and then start on a journey to some of the Southern cities. Several of the younger guests would remain to

dinner, others were invited for the evening, and it would be a regular party.

"It is mine as well as Marjorie's," she wrote, "and I want you. Come, even if you can get away only a day or two before, and, if you must, you shall return a day or two after. We are all hoping you will not go away until spring, but come you must. If you think best, mamma will write to your father."

There was a great deal more of entreaty, persuasion, and almost demand, and ardent affection. Willard wanted to see her and so did papa and everybody. Gowns and gifts and bridesmaids were in a jumble, and Helen could not forbear smiling over it. What a delightful visit it would be. But then she knew she could not go. She wondered why her father should evince a curious jealousy over these friends. It seemed to her one must love very warmly to be jealous.

Juliet Craven's letter was not exactly happy. She had made no new friends, and she had not done very well. Mrs. Davis had taken no notice of her since last summer, Mrs. Howard was going on a little trip South with her husband, who was not as well as usual, and she would stay at school.

The evident discouragement touched Helen, and she could see how Juliet dreaded her going away.

"I wonder how it comes that some people love me so easily," she mused, "when it is so hard to win a little affection from—others." She hated to put in her father's name. Was she trying her utmost? It was almost like waves surging against a rock. Yet some rocks did get worn away in time.

She must go away without seeing either of the girls. And if she were denied the right of corresponding with them? She knew what her father thought of girls' letters—that they led to exaggeration and were a waste of time and interest, better devoted to some wiser purpose. And he would be rather indignant if Mrs. Bell wrote to him. He might even suspect she had instigated it. Since he had a right to claim the five years, they should be given to him honestly, truthfully.

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CHAPTER XII

AMONG GIRLS

Professor Grant made no comment about his intentions the next day. Helen studied, recited, was dismissed when Mr. Walters came in, though it was quite along in the afternoon. So she put on her wraps for a walk. It was a fine winter day, with a crispness in the air that sent the blood rushing through a healthy body when youth stood at the prow. She had often said Hope was not beautiful, but she walked out by the river because she did not want to meet any one. That was a path of shimmering light, reflecting the leafless trees that overhung it in some places as if they were weird denizens of the underworld. Then they decreased to mere shrubbery, to willow wands, and here and there the crooked edges ran up into the land and were frozen with a skim of sparkling ice that gleamed in the dusk. The out-of-door world was so beautiful, so full of interest. She loved all these things so keenly.

She would fill her mind with glowing visions to solace herself in the days to come. Westchester, Oakdale, Hope. She did not care so much for the great city-oh, yes, there was the park. But there were parks and gardens in London; surely she must find something beside dry studies. She would take her favorite poets with her, she would read "In Memoriam" in the country of the poet, she would try to keep her own life from withering up, and when she was free-oh, what if she should not be free for years and years! Her father's eyesight was much poorer than when he first came. Once she had ventured to speak of it and he had rebuffed her tartly. He seemed afraid of sympathy, though he took a certain kind of admiration very complacently.

Suddenly a veil fell over all, the rise of ground on the other side was enlarged to a hill, the deep shadows of the trees suggested Greek myths, the big oak tree rustled its leaves slightly, the white birches seemed to shiver and be afraid, as if they were half human. She turned and walked briskly away. The low outline of the houses settled into dusky gray shadows, but the river still gleamed.

"Some day even you will be frozen up," she

said, "and there will be the merry voices and gay laughs of the skaters."

It was not late, although dusk had come so quickly. She did not care to reach home until dinner-time, so she stopped in the Library. How warm and cheerful it appeared. There were three or four High School girls at a table with some books spread out before them, and rather perplexed faces. Miss Westerly was busy changing books for the patrons. Helen glanced over—she had come to know several of the girls quite well—and they nodded to each other.

Opinions had varied greatly about Helen Grant. That she should be sent to a boarding school and be kept prettily dressed stirred up a good deal of envy in more than one heart. For Jason Mulford was just an ordinary farmer who was not above supplying Hope people with butter and eggs and poultry and whatever other produce he had to spare. And as for her father, the older people considered him "no great shakes," for Hope had not outgrown provincialisms with its pretty stores and paved sidewalks, its Library and Town Hall. And there were not wanting people to predict "that they always thought there was some-

thing queer about Mrs. Van Dorn, and they didn't see as there was any need of the girl being taken all over Europe when she hadn't a dollar to leave her."

But when Addison Grant came back with a list of letters to his name, and it was known that he was on the Oriental staff of the British Museum, Hope was quite proud that he had once been teaching school in the township. When he was called upon to lecture before societies his status was permanently fixed. And now the fact that he was to take Helen to London with him gave her a standing among the best. Mr. Warfield said she was an excellent scholar, and took no little credit to himself for having discovered her capabilities.

Helen never pushed herself forward or assumed any particular distinction, though she was under too much restraint to make very warm friends in the way of visiting. But she was always so cordial and so interested in what pertained to them, she enjoyed walks and talks with them whenever it was possible.

Now she went over to them.

"Oh, Helen Grant, we are deep in a Greek quagmire! Do help us out. Mr. Warfield is real hateful about some things. He thinks all we have to do is to learn, and I sometimes get sick and tired of books. Haven't you ever felt so?"

Sue Lang made a funny face that seemed to draw all the features in the middle and almost squeeze her nose out of place, and her voice had a girl's despair in it that shifts about as easily as the wind.

Helen laughed. "Yes, I have," she said. "When I first took up Greek the lodge in some vast wilderness looked attractive to me. But I am afraid I also made a sort of wry face over the Latin. Now I like it."

"You are studying real Greek with the funny letters. I can get along with English letters in Latin and French, but when you come to a new alphabet that you can't make beginning or end of—oh, yes, I do know Alpha and Omega, and that's all I want to know!"

"What a set the old Greeks were! Why couldn't they remain content to stay at home and sculpture beautiful statues and write splendid plays, instead of running off to war—"

"We shouldn't have had any Anabasis then," said Helen. "All those old nations were great warriors." "But the Persians were beaten, and it served them right. Now, if they had been beaten in the first mile or two——"

"Why, then we shouldn't have all these long journeyings to hunt up. It's worse than the children of Israel in the wilderness. I used to think it was a queer kind of story with all those Hivites and Jebusites and Amorites and what not, and I never do feel happy about their killing off each other so."

"Let me see the questions," said Helen.

They were laid out before her.

"The best way is to trace it along on the map;" and Helen turned two or three out before them. She was glad she could assist them. In the little while she could call her own let her sow some pleasant associations. She would like them to remember her kindly when she was on the other side of the ocean.

She was not aware how very interesting she made what had seemed "such an awful bore," as one of the girls said. And she compelled them, in a fashion, to answer their own questions. She had caught that of Miss Grace Aldred. But her eyes were so bright and the soft color kept hovering about her face, while

her low, attractive voice was like a tide that propelled a boat along.

Then the clock struck six. They all rose and glanced at each other in a sort of dismay.

"Helen Grant, you're the sweetest dear in the world!" exclaimed Nell Clark. "Oh, why are you not in school with us! You make everything so plain one can just see it. Why, you would be the most splendid teacher!"

They stood in a bevy about her with eyes smiling into hers, and a girl holding each hand. That had been her ideal. She loved girls so. A great wave of regret came up in her heart.

"And I had an idea you were quite stuck up with the wonderful things that had happened to you!" cried another. "It's a perfect romance. And I just envy your going over to London. But can't we see more of each other while you stay?" and there was sincerity in the pleasing tone. "What do you do evenings?"

"I generally read to father. He has done so much hard work with his eyes that they need a rest."

"Oh!" two or three faces fell in disappointment.

"But I take my walk from four to six.

We might meet here. And if I can help you in any way——"

"You are just lovely. I shall come here every afternoon, and if we haven't a wretched lesson we might take a walk. Oh, girls, I hate to go! I feel as if I had been in an enchanted country."

They fastened up their capes and cloaks and went downstairs in a girlish huddle. There they had to say good-night to several. Two or three walked a short distance with Helen, Sue Lang going out of her way to escort her to the Dayton gate. And she suddenly gave her a hug and kissed her. Girls' love might be foolish and evanescent, but it was very sweet.

Oh, the sorrowful things one must carry with a brave heart! Oh, the endless questionings as to how much one owes when the inmost soul shrinks from payment and would fain find release!

They were all in their places at the dinnertable when she entered with a bright color and shining eyes, out of which some tears had just dropped.

"What does make you stay out so late, Helen?" her father asked pettishly. "It is not seemly for a young girl to be rambling around in the dark."

"I was in the Library," she answered quietly. "And the street is lighted all the way."

"There is better reading for you at home. If I could I should like to pass a law that not a novel should be allowed in any library. Such trash ruins a girl's mind."

"There are many readers beside girls. Women who are tired and read for amusement, invalids who could not attack weighty subjects, and I think I know men who like a good novel as a rest from thought and care," said Mr. Warfield rather dogmatically.

"There are travels and biographies stranger than any fiction," was the tart reply.

"I think I have met with both that have really outdone fiction," was the dry response. "And I suppose when a town is taxed for the support of a library, its people ought to have some rights in the selection of books. Few men or women ordinarily have trained minds, and it hardly answers to be trained above one's walk in life."

The professor thought Mr. Warfield was often flippant.

"What were you reading?" he asked sharply of Helen when they were settled in his room.

"I was not reading. Some of the High School girls were studying the advance and the retreat of the Ten Thousand," she said in a quiet tone, with some dignity.

All the evening he was like a fractious child. Helen made a brave effort to restrain her temper and govern her voice as well as her replies.

The next morning he said:

"I have decided to accept this invitation to Washington. I have not seen the city in nearly twenty years, and as it is not at all likely I shall be in this country again, I ought to see whether it has really advanced any or not," rather ironically.

"But"—Helen glanced at the frail figure before her—" is it possible for you to go alone —best, I mean?" in some confusion.

"I am no child, nor yet superannuated," he answered testily. "I may stay a week or ten days. Mr. Walters goes, but for his own gratification. I am amply able to take care of myself. Then on my return preparations must be made for our voyage. I can delay it no longer. Answer according to my dictation."

Helen brought out paper and pen.

"The 19th," he began musingly. "There is a three-days' session. I might look in upon Congress before it adjourns. Well, we are to take our time. I may not be home until after Christmas. I will speak to Mrs. Dayton to look up a few things for you. There is plenty to be had in London, so there is no use loading yourself up with lots of baggage. And I want you to weed out your keepsakes that women have a knack of piling up. Don't accept any such nonsense. As for your books—well, I will look over them on my return. Are you ready?"

Helen felt that every nerve was in a quiver. Her precious books—not many, but all choice gifts, and most of them poets—to be thrown out by the hands of such a censor! But she made no protest, and the invitation was answered with acceptance.

She did not trust herself to meet the girls the next night, nor even drop in at Mrs. Wilmarth's. She wanted all her strength, so the walk was solitary. But a short distance down the street Mr. Warfield met her.

"I thought I'd look out that you were not running around alone," he began rather caustically. "What new ways have you found in which you have disappeared?"

"No new ways," she returned gravely.

"Helen, I am desperately sorry you have to go." His tone was noticeably softer.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she besought in the entreaty of anguish. "If you care about me, help me to be brave. It is inevitable."

If she were a year older! He had the grace to be silent.

And she thought what might be if she were five years older and her father were well.

He was rather unequal in temper for the next few days, but she tried to be very patient and do whatever he desired without any demur. She would have had no heart for the wedding festivities if she had been allowed to go. She pored over her dear books of poems, impressing them on heart and brain if they were not allowed to go with her. The pictures and gifts of the girls she had left at school she would put in Juliet's keeping, for she *must* come back, even if she were quite old, thirty or more.

The weather kept magnificent. Days of sunshine that had a wonderful glitter if not so

much warmth. And one morning, standing by the window, she repeated involuntarily:

- "' Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star,
 So long he seems to pause on thy bald awful head,
 O Sovran Blanc?"
- "What nonsense, Helen," was the sharp comment.
- "And yet it is by one of England's recognized poets, Coleridge, whose 'Ancient Mariner' is one of the masterpieces often quoted," Helen returned in a proud tone that was almost indignant.
- "Much you know about masterpieces," scornfully. "A man that the silly public ran after until he was eaten up by vanity, and held forth on all manner of nonsensical subjects. When you want real poetry I will choose it for you, and there are pages of the ancients that far exceed such rhapsodies. This was said thousands of years before by the poet of a time moderns think they have improved upon. He did not need the rhymster's petty art." In a clear, enthusiastic tone he began:
- "O Sun, thou hast stepped forth from the background of heaven, thou hast pushed back the bolts of the brilliant heaven! O Sun, above the land thou hast raised thy head!

O Sun, thou hast covered the immeasurable space of heaven and countries.

"O Sun, I have called unto thee in the bright heaven. In the shadow of the cedar art thou. Thy feet are on the summits. The countries have wished for thee, they have longed for thy coming, O Lord! Thy radiant light illumines all countries. Thou makest lies to vanish, thou destroyest the noxious influence of portents, omens, spells, and evil apparitions; thou turnest wicked plots to a happy issue."

Helen was surprised, almost transfixed. And he seemed mysteriously changed. Perhaps this was the way he appeared to an audience.

"That is magnificent," she said. "And they did believe in a heaven even then. They must have known—God," and her voice fell reverently.

"Child," he returned, "every nation has had a God and a religion. The Jews were not alone in their belief, as some would make out. They had times of forgetting their God, so did the nations round about. They lapsed into idolatry, so did others. It is the story of the world since it began."

"But—when Christ came—" She was pervaded by an awesome mystery.

"The followers of Christ must determine the worth of his doctrine. It is purer, it does not glorify self. Yet cruelties have been committed in the name of this religion. There, you are too young, you do not know enough to judge."

She thought of the poor and ignorant who

had simply believed.

He dropped into his usual impassive mood. If she might rouse him occasionally, if she could touch some responsive chord, if she could study him—but sixteen could not gauge the emotions that had been tried and trained for half a century.

After luncheon he lingered about downstairs, dismissing Helen with a wave of the hand.

"Mrs. Dayton," he began, "I shall have to ask you to look up whatever Helen will need for her voyage. I shall probably not be back until after Christmas, and, if the weather is not too threatening, we shall start early in the new year. I am indebted to you for kindness and hospitality, the little things mere money cannot repay, but I shall remember them.

You have been very good to her. It is hardly likely I shall ever return, and of course she will remain with me."

"But she will come now and then to her old friends. She is too true an American to give up her country altogether, too faithful to forget. She has been almost like a child to me;" and tears stood in her eyes.

"When one's lot is cast where it is best for him or her, one generally keeps within the bounds. She has had little real training as yet, and I have plans for her that she will be able to reach. She is not the usual vapid, flippant, superficial girl. I have watched her closely, and find there is something worth training."

When Mrs. Dayton was alone she sat down and cried. She thought Mr. Warfield was sometimes hard on the girls, but this man could squeeze all the youth and joy and vim out of a girl and make her a mere machine. Would Helen allow herself to be lopped off here and there, crushed in her tender heart, her sympathies, her love, which was, after all, the best quality in a woman, the best gift for her? And she bethought herself now how gradually Helen had given in to many things,

losing her brightness, the happy sweetness that had distinguished her, the gay, quick replies, the eager plans for this and that, always some one's pleasure.

"If he loved her one could stand it. He would be a selfish old man then, but she would have something in return, some reward. Oh, I wish she was a silly, flirty little thing, thinking of parties and beaus, but then she wouldn't be Helen Grant! I can't get resigned to her going away," she said with a passion of tenderness as she sprang up and began to dust vigorously.

Helen found that her father depended more upon her than he had when he took his journey to New York. Was his memory failing a little? For now he said: "Helen, where did you put those Chaldean notes?" that he had laid away himself. She did not rejoin, "I have not seen them since you used them," but looked noiselessly until she found them. Then it was something else. "Put these things away carefully and they will not need to be repacked; we shall go so soon. There is so much in method and order."

At times she half smiled, remembering some of Aunt Jane's rigid methods, but she went

about deftly, sweetly, as she had with Mrs. Van Dorn, but oh, how much she had given back! True, there was often a formal "thank you," but no tender response in the eyes, no smile. It was a fine, clear-cut, wintry face.

Dr. Bradford came in and had a long talk, which made the professor captious for the rest of the day. Mr. Walters had a more soothing effect. And so the days went on until the morning they were to start. Helen had packed his valise the night before, but he found a few things to add to it, and he had many charges to give, some of them repeated nervously, lessons and reading laid out, enough to last a month.

Dr. Bradford drove up in his sleigh with the Reverend Mr. Walters in it. There had been a fine snow two days before.

He took up his valise. "Let me carry it down for you," she proposed.

"No, don't come down. I dislike a crowd of people at the front doors, as if one were a missionary going into African wilds." Then he paused, came a step nearer, and, though he did not exactly look at her, he said in a rather softened tone: "Helen, you will make a good daughter when we are more together and out

of the reach of these disturbing elements. Good-bye, child."

Then he dropped a kiss on her forehead; at least his lips that lacked warm life-blood, just touched it. She was so amazed; then she flung her arms about him and kissed him, the first time in all these months. Brave as she was, she had been afraid of offering him any caress since her first few efforts had been so frostily nipped in the bud.

Did he give a gesture of dissent, or was it surprise? "Good-bye!" she exclaimed tremulously, and he walked out. Mr. Warfield helped him into the sleigh, and the bells jangled musically on the clear, crisp air.

Helen began to tidy up the room in a mechanical fashion. She looked over every paper. The old copies were of no value. Even her old exercises need not be kept. Here she had been writing out the Aramaic and Syriac alphabets, and she threw them in the wastebasket. Things of a class she slipped an elastic band about. His old study gown she would bring out in the sunshine. She would keep the fire, she might like to be alone,—yes, she knew she would,—or she might ask in some of the girls and go over the maps where

the foundations of the old cities had been traced out. And there were engravings of fine architecture, winged animals, man-headed lions, war processions bringing home treasures and captives.

It was all done at length, and she opened the windows wide. How exhilarating the air was! The eaves dripped to a musical tinkle, there were little rivulets speeding along in the gutters, mounds of snow here and there, a path cleared up and down the street. Sleighs were flying about. One stopped, that was Davy Engelthorpe, and Mr. Warfield went off with him. There must be some meeting, she decided. There were two more schooldays, and then a whole week's holidays. Tuesday would be Christmas. She ought to go and keep it with Uncle Jason.

She went downstairs presently. There was a curious silence between the two who loved each other so truly. It quite often happened now.

"You ought to have a holiday yourself, Helen," Mrs. Dayton ventured at length. "Why, you could have gone to that wedding."

"I am afraid I should have been the skeleton at the feast." "Oh, not so bad as that;" laughing. "You have been crowded out of so many things that girls enjoy."

"Father wouldn't have consented. And there would have been some festive array that I could not use afterward. No, I would rather stay at home."

Still that took her back to Aldred House and the girls she cared most for.

"Oh!" she cried, with a sudden brightening, "I've just thought—it would make me very happy, and I can't see any real wrong in it—if I might invite some one to spend a few days with me—"

"My dear child, of course you may. And if you wanted any of the girls in to dinner or a little evening spread! Yes, you ought to have a bright time that would be pleasant to recall."

"Oh, how good you have always been to me!" and with a soft sob she hid her face on the shoulder, while her arm went up around the neck.

"I'd be better now, if I could. Why, I'd have a lawsuit if it would do any good."

"I'd rather have the invitation. And it is a curious girl who came to school after having lived all her young life in the woods with a queer old grandfather, and now she will be very rich, but she is to a degree friendless. She doesn't know how to make friends, and that seems queer for a girl, for most of them I find are ready enough, even if they quarrel afterward. She has no place to go to, and must stay at school. Now, if I could ask her here for a few days—"

"Yes, yes, the whole week. Now, I mean you to have a real good time, Helen, and you must think up as many pleasures as you can."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times! I'll go and write my letter. Perhaps she can come on Saturday—if it is convenient."

"Any time will be convenient. We shall have only Mr. Conway to lunch. Mr. Warfield has gone over to Creston to arrange about some meeting and said he would be back in school by the afternoon session."

Helen could not have told why, but she was glad not to meet him. She began to understand her father's dislike for sympathy, yet it was sweet from Mrs. Dayton and Mrs. Wilmarth.

"Oh," with a little laugh at herself, "I think I am meant for an old maid. Women

have so many pretty, beguiling ways that men lack. There is a hardness in them that grates upon one. But then, there is Mr. Wilmarth, and Mr. Bell, and Uncle Jason, and I don't know many others."

She was really bright at luncheon, and propounded two or three "catches" to Mr. Conway. She had written a tender, persuasive letter to Juliet, and inclosed a note to Mrs. Wiley explaining how much she desired this, as early in the new year she was to leave for England with her father.

"I am going to the office," she announced, "and then to Mrs. Wilmarth's. I may stay to dinner if I am urged strongly," a sense of mirthfulness shining in her eyes.

"What a lovely sunshiny heart Helen Grant has," Mrs. Dayton said to Joanna. "She is like some flowers that push up as soon as they have a chance at the light. She said something to me one day that is so like her, if I can remember it:

"'I am Thy grass, O Lord,
I grow up sweet and tall
But for a day, beneath Thy sword
To lie at evenfall!'

And it seems as if she was content to be just grass."

CHAPTER XIII

BLOOMS OF WINTER

HELEN was just in time for a sleigh ride. Mr. Wilmarth had driven up to the door and nodded cordially. Mrs. Wilmarth opened the hall door in her fur cloak and with a veil tied securely about her hat.

"Oh, yes, you must," the gentleman said to her demur. "The seat is broad, and you are both slim; besides, a little crowding will help keep you warm. And I doubt if there's such another day this winter. Spring is in the air, and the sunshine; it has escaped some way out of season, and will play havoc with the snow. It is simply magnificent, and we will take to country ways lest we get stranded."

It was splendid—she was quite girlish enough for the adjective. Whether it was the ozone, or the radium that will presently be discovered in the purest layers of air, they were all very merry.

Going through a stretch of woods, Helen

tried the bugle song, and the echoes did answer. Mr. Wilmarth whistled a sort of accompaniment, an old accomplishment of his. They passed some heavy country sleighs, but the crews were just as merry.

And when the sun went westward, the sky took on some glowing colors that gave the snow pale, rainbow tints and set the small hillocks with iridescent gems. The haystacks seemed like pictures of Norway cottages, and some of the shocks of corn that had been stripped of their ears where they stood were Indian wigwams. Here and there a tree was sharply outlined against the sky, the leafless branches crossing and recrossing, and the groups of cedars took the blueness of the eastern sky, while one great oak fairly flamed in the red sunset.

Of course the invitation was not only forth-coming, but insistent. Then they sat around the fire, and Mrs. Wilmarth talked of Christmas days in her girlhood's home. Somehow, they could not bear to mention the coming parting and discrown the happy time.

What did Helen mean to do?

"I am to have a friend visit me, at least I hope so," she answered. "I want to bring

her here and have you hear her play. She has a curious and most delightful gift of improvising. And I wish I might interest you in her. She is so alone, having no near relatives."

"The girl with all that money you once spoke of?"

"Yes," in a soft, pleading tone.

"But why doesn't she find friends? I do not mean buy them with your lavishness, but you can do many delightful things with money," said Mr. Wilmarth.

"She doesn't know how." Helen smiled with a tender grace. "And she doesn't want to be loved for her money. She is a young-old girl, if you can understand that. She is afraid of the older girls because they are so wise and so ready with their knowledge and wit, and the younger ones do not want her. She is grave and not bubbling over with fun, as most schoolgirls are. But I wish she had a dear friend to advise her, to train her, to show her that real life is a pleasant and joyous thing."

"You will always make joy out of it."

"Oh, no, I can't always. But when I get in the gloom of the forest, and the thick trees shut out the sun, I try to find what some one called Resignation Pass, and the end of that leads to the light. I suppose most of us have some trials but Daisy Bell. She has the most lovely things in her life of any one I know."

"And is she very happy?"

"I think she is generally, only-"

"Well, Miss Philosophy, only what?"

"I believe they are happiest who want to share their joys with some one," and a gentle gravity overspread the fair face. "There are five people always ministering to her. She isn't mean or ungenerous, but she is ready to do kindly deeds only for those she likes. I hoped she would come to like Juliet Craven, but there is a wide sea between. And she is so charming, too. I do believe if she raised her little finger some girl would rush to her."

"I am interested in your Juliet, and shall like to see her," Mrs. Wilmarth said, who had been silently listening to the talk between Helen and her husband. "I can't promise to like her offhand, and I hope she isn't one of the girls who make a passion of humbleness, and fill the atmosphere with a sort of gloom and depression."

"Oh, she isn't that sort at all, only she has too low an estimate of herself."

"A rather uncommon fault nowadays, and among girls I should say," laughed Mr. Wilmarth.

"If I were rich and had a sanitarium I should make most people go out and dance in the sunshine, or play 'tag.' Why shouldn't grown-up people play tag? They try to outwit and outdo and get the best of others in a hundred different ways."

"Put me down for your sanitarium, Helen," said Mrs. Wilmarth in a bright tone. "I may not be able to play tag, since I should hate to be always it. But I might dance a little in the sunshine. I am sure you would make a splendid keeper."

The three were very merry over that. Then the clock struck nine. What a joyous evening it had been, only evenings always were so short over here.

Mr. Wilmarth escorted her home, but about halfway they met Mr. Warfield, who had meant to walk down for her.

"I suppose you have begun holidays," he said in the hall. "There is one more school day."

"There will be a great many for me," she returned gravely. "Do not grudge me the few holidays left."

She wondered at times why he should be so captious. He was not nearly so pleasant as

in the old days.

The next day she spent with Mrs. Dayton sewing, and did not even go out for a walk. It was sunny and slushy and the snow was fast

disappearing.

Saturday morning two telegrams reached her. Mr. Walters sent to say the journey was pleasant and her father was not at all fatigued. Miss Craven said she would be in the train that reached Hope at four. "Glad and happy."

It was quite like old times to help work about the house. She built a fire in the stove in the guest chamber, and asked the market-boy to bring her a red geranium in bloom. At three she went down to the Library and found two of the girls there who were having a discussion about "Marcella." She had to admit that she had not read it, but Miss Westerly said, "You had better take it home. I'd like to hear your opinion about her."

She watched the train in. What if some-

thing had happened! She felt that a disappointment would break her heart. Oh, there was a tall girl in a dark blue suit and hat with a long plume, and a beautiful fur scarf, who smiled and clasped her hand, and neither of them spoke until they had left the platform; then it was a girl's happy greeting on both sides.

"It was so good of you to ask me to come," Miss Craven said in a voice of emotion.

When she had taken off her things in the guest chamber, where the lamp shed a mellow glow and the red geranium stood by itself on a small stand, she turned and faced Helen.

"Oh," she began, "you have grown and changed mysteriously. You would hardly be classed with the juniors unless they were slow, of my kind. You can't think how every one at school has missed you, and how they have quoted Helen Grant. Is it the good fortune of having a quotable name as well as a quotable personality?"

"Why, I think it must be," and Helen smiled at the idea. "I do not believe it was all owing to my many virtues," her eyes dancing with mirth and her face in a gleam of sunshine.

Then she took a mental inventory of her friend. It seemed to her that Juliet did not look as old as when she first entered school. Her complexion had cleared up somewhat, and now there was a pink tint in her cheek which was very becoming. Her hair was a little fluffy, not brushed back so tightly; she had grown fuller about the neck and chin and shoulders, and stood up straighter, and there was some modern girlish neckwear. Then she looked at one with rather less fear or hesitation.

"Well?" in a tone of inquiry, the smile just hovering about as you sometimes see the suggestion of the sun between clouds when it doesn't quite venture to shine.

"You have improved!" Helen exclaimed decisively. "I think you have had a good time at school this term, and are not sorry you went back."

"I'm not sorry. I don't know half the things a girl of my age ought to," somewhat despondingly.

"Oh, bother the age! or rather, don't bother about it at all. Don't you remember the poem I went wild over and used to quote, 'We should count time by heart throbs'? You must

learn all you can and put it into practice. And then you see so many ways of applying it. There nearly always is something that you can give people if you are watching for the opportunity. I am beginning to think the most splendid thing in life is the power of giving, and the saddest is to have one's knowledge just revolve about one's self."

"But if you don't know how to give?" helplessly.

"We learn all other things, why can we not learn that? There are qualities that do not come natural, that have to be cultivated. Have

you made any friends?"

Juliet flushed. "Oh," she said hesitatingly, "I do not want any friend but you, any girl friend, I mean. And it breaks my heart to have you go away. But I suppose—you wish to?"

"No, I do not," Helen returned frankly.

"I would a hundred times rather stay here.

I'd like to go back to Westchester and remain all next year and fit myself for college. I've dreamed it over until I have gone almost wild.

And now I've put the blessed thing out of my life. It is not for me."

"Wouldn't your father permit you to stay?

Oh, Helen, I want you so very much! And I've hoped that if he knew there was some one who would be glad to share with you——"

Juliet's face was scarlet with a certain delicacy. She had wanted to write this proffer, but she could never get the phrases to suit her, and now she could not put it in the words she desired. There are thoughts that plan themselves in a shapely manner in the brain, but cannot seem to find a fitting utterance. When the flowering-out time comes, and one learns to give the best of one's self, it is easy to offer what one has. But it was only a timid little bud held out awkwardly.

"Oh, Juliet Craven! Yes, I know what you mean," and Helen hid her face on the other's shoulder a moment while she tried to steady her pulses and her voice. "It is very, very generous—"

"There is so much," pleaded the older girl.

"And if it has anything to do with money, if you could persuade your father to leave you here—."

"You see, I could have earned my own way," Helen returned a little proudly. "When father first talked of taking me I kept storing up courage to explain to him all my objections

I could make a good fight. I do not want that kind of life, and yet now I have to fight on the other side and make myself content. His health is rather delicate and his eyesight very poor. It has failed a good deal in two months. And now, you see, it is a duty to go."

The rest Helen would never tell to any friend, though she knew Mrs. Dayton understood the tremendous sacrifice it would be to go to such a loveless life. But her father's kiss upon her forehead grew warmer until it had taken a semblance of the true humanity kindled within her.

Juliet was speechless. She had dreamed over this for weeks, and the sudden downfall was crushing.

"So you see there is no further choice. Then, I am not of age. And when there is no other way, when the path seems to be marked out so straight, and the voice says, 'Walk ye in it,' there can be no turning aside."

Helen had summoned all her courage to keep any touch of disappointment and sorrow out of her voice. She had not meant to confess so soon. She could not have gone through it so successfully with importunate Daisy Bell. But she was glad now the matter was settled, and they could go on to the real satisfaction of visiting.

Juliet's eyes were full of tears. "I suppose it will be a long while, then," she began tremulously. "But I can come over and find you."

- "Yes, you may have the real work of the friendship to keep up," Helen said with a cheerful sound in her voice. She would not darken the future.
- "Now I want to hear about the school and the girls. There are some new scholars, of course."
- "There are two young ladies fitting for college. One of them is an acquaintance of Mrs. Howard's."
 - "Then you ought to be friends."
- "Miss Wilkins is too full of study to waste time upon any one. And several young girls. One is very pretty, and rooms with Daisy Bell. They are chums."
 - "I'm glad Daisy Bell found some one-"
- "But she seemed to love you so," rather confused.
- "I suppose she does still. I had a charming letter from her. They asked me for a Christmas visit, which I thought wonderfully

kind, seeing they were likely to have a house full of wedding guests."

"The wedding is to be a great thing," Juliet said gravely. "How lovely it must be to have sisters, to have any relatives who care for one."

The room was growing dusky. Helen drew the chairs up near the stove, though it was warm enough anywhere. She opened the door and the light illumined the room, skimming and dancing over the ceiling like fairy sprites.

Helen's heart was too sore to talk about herself. In fact, what was there in the unknown future to rear air castles upon?

"You had a good deal of trouble in the summer," she said. "I regretted that I could not come to you. But I had been at the Bells while father was away, and then he wanted me."

"Yes. I was sorry to have it reach such a decided issue. Mr. Davis was deeply affronted, and said I had made an ungrateful return for his wife's kindness, and that her only desire was to establish me in society in the manner that my means demanded. And you see now I am of age—twenty-one—and can do what I like with my income, at least

a part of it. And the worst is that Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Howard had been very fair friends, and she wrote a sharp, uncalled-for, and very insulting letter to Mrs. Howard, and washed her hands of me, she declared. Mrs. Howard is very anxious now about her husband, and I am sorry to have made her so much trouble. There is nothing I can do for her, but I am grateful for her coming into my life, and I do love her."

It was a sad story, after all. If Helen was to remain here they might seal the bond between them and be like sisters. That with all this money Juliet should not know just what to do with her life, and, with youth and longing for love, not know how to attain to it, seemed almost a tragedy. Out of daily life she was missing what her heart desired with an aching, sorrowing sort of passion, and yet, had not God given every soul some work to do? Helen had found hers. It was not in the ambitious line she would have chosen. It was not along the path of love and tenderness that she would gladly give, that she knew how to give, it was to traverse an arid sort of desert. But in all deserts there were oases, and she would trust to find hers.

They went down to dinner. Mr. Warfield was disappointed that this girl had come to take up Helen's time and interest. He had been giving the matter a good deal of thought. Professor Grant's scholarship was fine and unusual, but not broad or comprehensive. Intellectuality had been cultivated at the expense of humanity—perhaps the tendency was born in the man-and there was need of just such scholars in the world who could immure themselves in silence and narrowness, and, seeing only the one light shining ahead, follow it with heroic resolution. But to condemn a bright young girl to such a life was barbarous. He knew she shrank from it by the way she evaded all discussion of it. And he meant in this leisure time to constitute himself her best friend, to have her rely upon him, confide in him, and next summer he would come as a ray of light and hope into her dreary life.

What did she see in this plain, quiet girl to care about? And to have her around a whole week, the last week of grace. He could not blame Mr. Grant so much for shutting out girls.

Helen was minded to be very bright and chatty. She and Mr. Conway were often

having little passages at arms. He saved entertaining bits of talk to repeat to her, and brief stories with a point so amusing, and that she saw so quickly that Mrs. Dayton always laughed at with her cheerful ring.

Then they went over in the parlor. If they only had a piano! They talked a little about music, and Mr. Warfield thought he might as well go out for an evening walk, since he was not even secondary.

It was well that he did, for there was an influx of girls, his classgirls, and some of them had been rated pretty soundly the last few days of the term for not reaching a higher standard. It was discouraging when you were doing your very best not to have pupils second your efforts.

There were four girls, headed by Sue Lang. Helen introduced them to her friend.

"Imagine all the comments made about the weather," began Sue. "Holidays are too precious to be discussing that, and there will always be weather of some sort while the world stands. We have been planning a lark, a regular Christmas party, so arranged that it won't interfere with any one's pleasure or dinner, for we have taken Wednesday night. The notice isn't very long, but then it is to be for

the fun and not the fine dressing. We shall all have our fill of that in the Christmas turkey."

Nelly Clark giggled.

"I suppose you have noticed that the Hendersons have been building an addition to their house, a lovely big parlor, but it won't be finished and furnished before spring. And Mrs. Henderson has been good enough to let us christen it. We are to have a real girls' frolic, though we shall ask in some boys. I think they add a zest to the occasion. And now we are around inviting our guests. We can't afford gilt-edged paper and monograms, and it isn't to be that kind, but just real fun. And Meta was afraid that you despised—"

"No, I didn't say despised," interrupted Meta Henderson. "I said perhaps you didn't care so much for fun."

"But I do," subjoined Helen, her eyes sparkling, and her joyous tone settled the question at once.

"We want you very, very much, and more especially since you are going away, and we shall not have many chances to proffer our hospitality. I've been in love with you ever since that night in the library, you remember.

Oh, you should have seen how we amazed Mr. Warfield the next day," and Sue laughed gayly. "Meta here ought to be—spokeswoman, shall I say?"

"It was your idea, Sue, yours and mother's. And we shall be so glad to have you, Helen, and your friend, if she will come."

"She is going to spend a week with me, and I have been running over in my mind what the advantages for amusement were, unless

there came a big snowstorm."

"Oh, I wish there would! That one little snow went off so soon! Even the skating isn't very good, and the driving is horrid. The only thing that is magnificent is the sunshine, and I do hope it will shine out its best on Christmas Day."

"And not rain on Wednesday night."

"As if we minded a little rain!"

"But I don't want an awful downpour. And when I think

> "'Into some lives the rain must fall, Some days must be dark and dreary,"

I always hope it won't be mine. That's awfully selfish, isn't it?"

"I've seen rainy days that I really liked," said Ellen Jay, "but the dark and dreary ones

I pray Heaven to avert. Though I do not believe they usually come to youth, except the sentimental girls who are fond of gloomy problem books, and think a desolate and weary air becoming to their style of beauty. I'm going to have all the good times I can, if I do not achieve the Latin oration when I graduate."

"There is not the slightest hope or danger of that," remarked Sue sententiously.

"Well, I don't care. I can make lovely toast, and gems that will melt in your mouth. And I can trim a hat so that you couldn't tell it from real French style. I appropriated the idea of Miss Reed's pattern hat the first Saturday she put it in the window, and came out with it at church on Sunday. Oh, my! Wasn't she mad!"

They all laughed.

"And I mean to keep house for some nice young fellow and help him save up his money. It may not be an intellectual ambition, but perhaps you are aware it takes all sorts to make a world. I'm one of the sorts."

Then they went back to the party. It was really delightful to Helen to be counted in with a bevy of girls, and she kept drawing Juliet to the center instead of letting her slip to the background. They were interested in the "evenings" they had at Aldred House when they played at entertaining, and the tables, where one girl had to be hostess.

"Oh, do you see how late it is?" cried Nelly Clark. "We've had just a lovely time, and I'd like to stay until ten, but, girls, we have three more invitations to give, and they must be brief and to the point. We are glad to have met your friend, and we hope she will enjoy herself here in plain, old-fashioned Hope."

"But Hope is such a suggestive, comforting name," returned Juliet. "And I like the

country."

They went out to the dining room, where Mrs. Dayton sat reading the paper, and Helen explained the main errand of her visitors.

"Oh," she answered, with a light of pleasure in her face, "I am so glad some one is going to have a little merry-making. That is splendid in Mrs. Henderson. I was thinking I ought to give you a sort of send-off, Helen, but you do not know many of the girls. You have been kept pretty close with old people,"

and she gave a soft sigh. "There might be a luncheon—"

"And perhaps I should offend some that I didn't feel free to ask. You were lovely to think of it, though," and she kissed her.

Then they went upstairs and sat over the fire and talked. Girl friendships are laughed at because they evolve the sentimental side, but a girl incapable of an enthusiastic and generous friendship is likely to make a narrow, gossiping woman. Out of the great volume of sand washing up on the sea-shore of life there are many grains of gold that the earnesthearted gather and treasure for after days. For in this eager time of youth we sow seed with a prodigal hand, and it would be strange indeed if some did not fall on stony ground, some on arid soil, that springs up and withers away. But, thank the Saviour, who gave the promise, there is a little that bears fruit fourfold.

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CHAPTER XIV

A GOLDEN CHRISTMAS

THE prospect was that the week would not lack its share of good times. When they came out of church on Sunday Mr. Wilmarth walked over to them and was introduced to Miss Craven.

"Mrs. Wilmarth had a headache this morning, but she charged me to ask you to dinner to-morrow evening, and you were to come early in the afternoon, so that she could have a visit with you when I should not be a marplot," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, Mr. Wilmarth, I do not believe she said *all* of that," answered Helen, with a lingering laugh in her tone.

"Yes, I am pretty sure. You will come?"

"We shall be very glad to. Take my warmest sympathy back to her."

Then Nathan drove over in the afternoon and said his mother wanted Helen to take Christmas dinner with them. Jenny and Joe were to be there, and Mrs. Willets was coming to cook the dinner. And Sam was to bring his girl.

Nathan was rather shy of Miss Craven at first until she mentioned some incident of her girl life on the lonely mountain that interested him, and they branched off into bits of experience and the queer narrowness and obstinacy of farming people who thought their grandfathers' ways were good enough to serve while the world lasted. Juliet was at home here, and not afraid to talk.

"And if you and your friend wouldn't mind the rather bad roads," he began as he rose to go, "I'd like to take you over to Drewsville to-morrow morning. I have to go for father. He isn't so fond of kiting round as he used to be. We'll be back by noon. There's a fellow in the town who has a splendid greenhouse. I'm awful fond of flowers, though how I did hate to weed the front-yard beds, hey, Helen! But you were not much better, only you went at it like a Trojan. You always did carry things straight through."

That amused them both very much.

[&]quot;What a nice young fellow your cousin is!"

Juliet exclaimed with shining eyes. "If my brother had lived—"

"Nat was a rather queer sort of boy, but I think he is going to make a first-class farmer. He and his father are great friends now, cronies—that word just expresses it. You will like to see his pens of handsome chickens, and he doesn't let them get out and scratch up everything," laughing at the remembrance of how Aunt Jane used to scold about the destruction the hens worked.

Evening service was out early, and Helen read poetry aloud for an hour. Mrs. Dayton dozed a little over it, but Juliet listened with rapt attention and could have stayed up half the night.

The next morning was bright and sunny. Wiseacres shook their heads. Such weather couldn't last. That was what nearly every old farmer they passed said.

"We will enjoy it while it does last," declared Helen. "We are not going to let a possible to-morrow spoil to-day."

"That's good," commented Nat.

It was not a beautiful section of country, rather too flat, good meadow lands, and wide stubble fields where grain had grown. Here and there a clump of trees, most of the woodlands had been cleared off. Farmhouses, barns, sheds, and hayricks made the diversity. But Drewsville was quite thriving, with several factories and mills and streets of cottages.

When the business had been accomplished they hunted up the greenhouse, quite at the end of the town, protected on the north by a strip of woods.

"To think I have lived so near and never been in Drewsville before!" exclaimed Helen with a sense of amusement. "Why, it is smarter than Hope in some ways, but not so pretty in others. And I never dreamed of a greenhouse!"

"The flowers are packed and shipped away to New Alton, perhaps they go farther on. I discovered it quite by accident, though I'd wondered what all these long, low, glass-roofed houses were. Isn't it queer how ignorant people can be?" laughing as if at himself.

"Well, they begin from nothing," returned Helen. "They have it all to find out."

"And some don't care to find out—much," with an impatient accent.

But the greenhouses were worth coming to see, though Mr. Cornish said he had cut hun-

dreds of the choicest blossoms and sent away that very morning for Christmas. Two days hence he had another large order to fill.

There was a house of callas and Bermuda lilies, some of them just green stalks yet. Many had been cut, but the sweetness remained in the moist atmosphere. Primroses just coming into bloom, dainty little geraniums, long beds of heliotropes sending out a pungent odor. But the roses!

"If you could have seen them yesterday you would have exclaimed," said Mr. Cornish. "Some were too old to cut. You must have buds hardly ready to open; the warm atmosphere in a room does the rest."

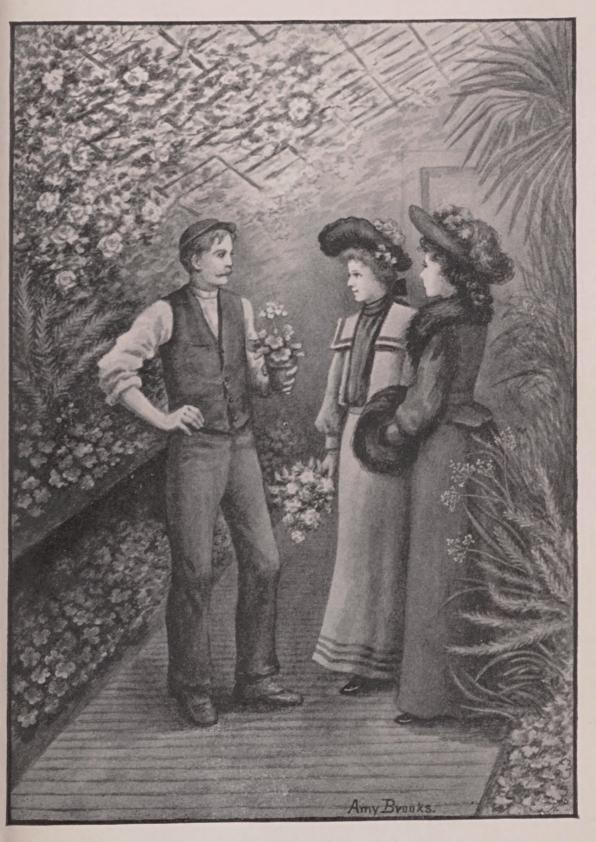
Nathan kept asking questions without being obtrusive. Mr. Cornish was a florist for love of it, not merely the profit, and he liked the boy's interest.

"I wonder if you would sell one bunch to one customer?" inquired Helen with a gay little sound in her voice; "or is that order insultingly small?"

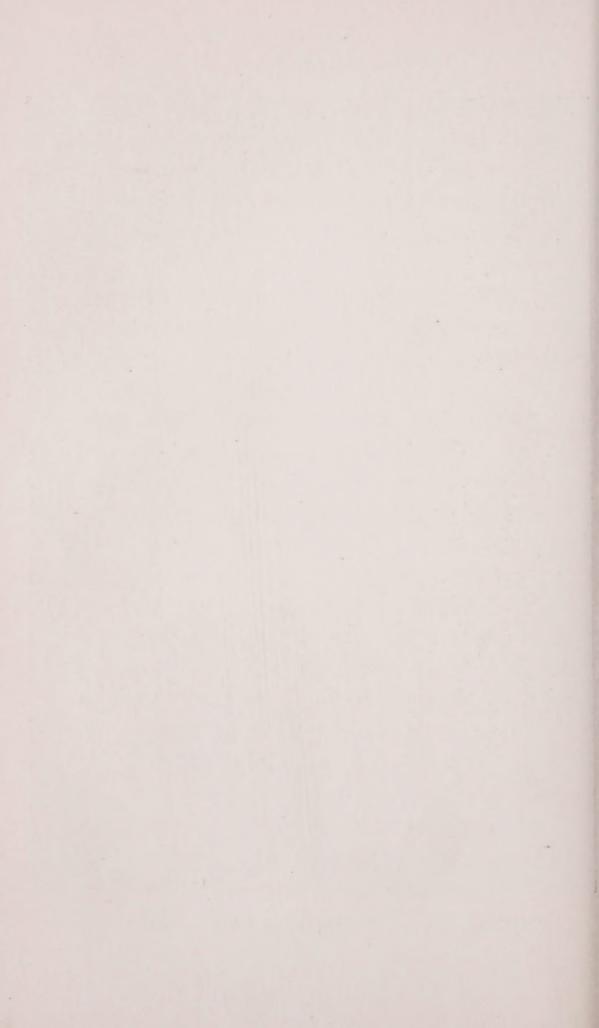
"If you didn't want the very best I have."

[&]quot;But I want it nice. For an invalid."

[&]quot;Well, let us see. Roses?"



"It isn't always the cost of the gift." — Page 289.



"Roses and heliotrope and some of this white, feathery plant, and a pot of primrose."

So they went back to the rose house, and Helen thought him quite generous, though he admitted they were not the most valuable roses.

"They are beautiful and fragrant and will give as much pleasure. It isn't always the cost of the gift."

"No, you are right enough there."

He did them up securely from the cold. Her primrose was a beautiful deep pink.

"Mr. Mulford, you ought to be a florist yourself," Juliet said when they were back in the wagon.

"I'll see what happens to me in the next ten years. I shall not be old enough to wither up with old age by that time. But I'm going to make a small cold-frame place next summer and try some experiments."

"Oh," Helen said with tender, approving eyes. How Nat was developing fine and unusual tastes!

When they neared Hope she asked him to drive around in Renwick Street.

"I'll get out just a moment!" she exclaimed. "This is the house." She did not go in, but sent the flowers with her love.

"I'll be over early to-morrow morning," promised Nat. "Be sure you're ready."

The primrose was for Mrs. Dayton, who was delighted. Then Juliet wondered why she had returned empty-handed. There was a grace in gift-giving she had yet to learn, that a surprise had a charm.

All dinner time Helen was full of enthusiasm about the Cornish greenhouses. Was this the girl who had gone so quietly about her distasteful tasks all the autumn, and must return to her prison bars in a few weeks at the farthest?

"You will be demoralized by so much dissipation," suggested Mr. Warfield rather petulantly.

She glanced up brightly, saucily, and yet when she turned away her eyes filled with tears. It was for everybody's sake that she was vivacious and full of sunshine. She wanted them all to remember her in this fashion. She had inherited some of her father's traits, after all, but she would never carry them to excess. And now it was not so much that she disdained

pity as that she did not dare pass a certain boundary for fear of breaking down.

"My dear, your flowers were such a surprise," said Mrs. Wilmarth with her tender greeting. "Where did you get them? I was such a baby that I sat down and cried for pure joy. I knew the Stirlings would not let you have them while you were in the flesh—or spirit, rather."

"We had a fine drive over to Drewsville. I did not know of the establishment there, but my cousin Nat had found it out."

"Drewsville! Why, we must go over there. We keep a few, but the trouble is to make anything but geraniums bloom, though I shall have some callas presently. I can luxuriate in out-of-doors summer blooms, but—roses and heliotrope in winter! Oh, my dear, I wonder how I shall ever get on without you?"

"You must put some one in my place," in a quick, breathless fashion as the five years rose before her grim and ghostly.

"No, that cannot be done. I shall keep the place sacred to you. There may be other places—"

"And other people. Oh, there are souls suffering for love."

Then they sat by the grate and talked of the things they loved,—poems, books, pictures,—and Helen in some curious fashion made Juliet join, hesitatingly at first, but warming up with the brightness around, being penetrated with a sense of something she had not quite understood before, a sort of beauty and delight in life that drew her in the enchanted current.

Mr. Wilmarth found them here. They were not half talked out, but there was dinner, and the table must have the lovely gift carried out to it.

"Why, I do believe I'd have sent over there for enough to adorn the whole house and keep Christmas with, if I had known of this man," he said.

"Oh, you couldn't have coaxed so much out of him," returned Helen laughingly. "I only asked for a little. And he weighed the pros and cons about the heliotrope. I saw the mental balancing in his mind. I think every spray and more beside was engaged, but I stood there patiently—"

"And persuaded with every line in your face. He simply couldn't resist," interrupted Mr. Wilmarth in a teasing tone. "My dear,"

to his wife, "think how your satellites adore you."

"They do not revolve often enough to be satellites. Think up some other appellation."

"There is nothing dearer than friends."

After dinner Helen sent Juliet in the parlor to play by herself. She knew she would strike her true enthusiasm sooner, and in this she was right. Helen wanted to listen as well and not look. So she pushed the ottoman over and sat beside Mrs. Wilmarth, clasping her hand.

It was "Songs without Words," first. Then a nocturne. After that she did not mind and went on with dainty, delicate touches, slow, tender movements, now with a little awe, then a full sweep of hope—a wandering it might be in forest depths with the quiet ripple of a brook creeping down, then a clear, joyous bird song, a slow hush as of night, a gentle fading away into silence.

"That is exquisite. Do you know what it is? I have never heard it before."

Mrs. Wilmarth's eyes were soft and lustrous. Helen smiled up to them.

"She puts chords and snatches of things together that way. I don't quite know that it is improvising, for it is a strain from this or that music that she loves when she doesn't like all of a piece. I think it a most delightful gift. I used to listen to it at school entranced."

"Why, she is a fine musician."

"That is her gift. I believe I like it better than verse writing. But then I couldn't do either."

"You have another. You can love and be beloved."

"But if one could, as it were, send love, give it to some one in need and necessity, and have him or her understand it, that it was the great thing of life, inspire one, I think that is what I mean, to actually see what is given," she said breathlessly.

She thought now and then of her father's loveless life with a pang. Hardly an hour but he was in her mind.

"Helen, you are transcendental," said Mr. Wilmarth with a vague smile. "You are to give to him that asketh. And I am sure so good a thing as love is worth asking for by look or tone or gesture if it cannot be put into words. If a man were born blind he could stretch out his hand when he heard a tone of kindness that roused him."

There was mental blindness. Helen was silent.

"What has happened to your musician?"

But as Mr. Wilmarth spoke Miss Craven broke into a soft, merry Scotch lilt that had in it wooing winds, dancing waters, and the joyous warbles of birds on the wing, now nearer, now farther off, with a faint echo of song from the voice that had pathos, if not depth.

Mrs. Wilmarth rose with an eager light in her eyes.

"Shall we disturb her?" she asked with a sort of entreaty that it might be otherwise. "Oh, Helen, thank you a thousand times for this treat. But, my dear girl, it cannot wile my heart away from you," and she kissed her.

"We shall not disconcert her now, I am sure," replied Helen with a smile of certainty. "She is rather diffident at first. Is there such a thing as having too much humility? I shall not be likely to suffer from it," and she glanced up archly.

"I think you understand your own limitations wonderfully for a girl. You seem to go straight along where you know the current and not make fruitless detours, about which most people waste so much time," Mr. Wilmarth answered.

"I do not seem ever to have had any time to waste. There was always something ahead for me to do. I couldn't play like that if I tried for days, but I might learn some written music. I have the name of being a good scholar, and a few things I seem to master at a glance, but I do study with all my might and main, as the children say, when a task is difficult or when I do not take to it cordially."

"A most excellent practice, and sure to lead to success," was the approving reply.

Miss Craven raised her eyes, with a welcome that delighted Helen, as they entered the room. There was a tint of color in her cheeks, and her friend thought if her eyes could keep that eager interest no one would call them dull.

"Have I tired you?" she inquired. "My best excuse is that the piano is exquisite. You can get the most delicious tones from it. Ours at school are fairly abused, you know. It is often martyrdom to practice."

"You have enchanted us all," replied her hostess. "But I wanted to see you as well."

She was worth seeing at that moment,

Helen thought. Yes, music was the keynote to her real development, yet it was not the music most readily understood by the average listener.

"Here is a book of old Scotch songs," Mrs. Wilmarth said. "We were very fond of them in the days when I played," and there was an unconscious regret in her tone. "Helen sings some of them."

"Oh, what shall it be, then?" She turned the leaves of the book, glancing at her friend. Helen selected two that were great favorites with Mrs. Wilmarth, and put spirit into them as well as tenderness.

"I wonder if we couldn't have a little Christmas music?" Mr. Wilmarth inquired presently. "All the Hopes are queer about Christmas, don't you think so, Helen? There are family gatherings, but no hearty church celebrations. I suppose most of the people come from the stock that tabooed Christmas long ago, forgetting the significance and looking only at the rubbish that overlaid it. But I like the religious observance of it."

They found some beautiful hymns, "Stilly Night," and "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing." Mr. Wilmarth had a very good tenor

voice. They were in the midst of serene enjoyment when the door-bell rang.

Helen started with vague alarm. It was Mr. Warfield's voice, and he was ushered in.

He had paced up and down in the chilly night air until he had grown impatient, though he had not meant really to call.

"Mrs. Dayton suggested that I should come for you and save Mr. Wilmarth the trouble of escorting you home," he said in a tone of apology, and just then the great clock in the hall struck ten. The girls glanced at each other in half dismay that was amusing.

"There's an old song or poem," began Mr. Wilmarth, "in which these two lines occur:

"'Could I but grasp time's wings
I'd furl them all together,'

and we'd make the evening last ever so much longer. But I suppose it would be useless to set the clocks back after they have once told their story, and we haven't a wheel of time."

There was a rueful yet laughing light in his face.

"It is getting late," said Helen gravely.
"I hope we haven't tired you, Mrs. Wilmarth.
And we must bid you good-night."

The ladies went out of the apartment.

"I have had such a delightful evening," the hostess said. "Oh, you will bring your friend again before she goes away? Come and stay to luncheon and let us have a nice, long afternoon. You have made me hungry for more of that fascinating music. And I do not love all piano playing. The loud, rushing kind distresses me."

The girls promised. Helen took her friend upstairs for their wraps.

"Can Mrs. Wilmarth never get well?" asked Juliet. "And this lovely house—not too grand for everyday use." The girl's voice shook with emotion.

"She has a severe spinal trouble and a good deal of heart weakness. The doctor ordered entire quiet and absence from all excitements, so they came to Hope, partly because Mr. Wilmarth had some money invested here. That is why she does not go out much, and there is not a great range in Hope society," with a rather abrupt intonation.

There were some more adieus downstairs and the trio set forth. It was a quiet walk, though the girls would have found enough to say to Mr. Wilmarth. The subtle chain of sympathy was broken.

"It was very kind of you to come for us, Mr. Warfield," Helen said in the hall with her good-night.

Nathan drove over for them the next morning, and, though there was considerable crispness in the air the winter sunshine had a

golden tint.

All was confusion at Aunt Jane's. Though Mrs. Willets had come to cook the turkey, Aunt Jane went back and forth, sure of fifty misfortunes that never happened. If Aurelia strayed in the parlor she was called out, though she soon whisked back again. When Jenny and the baby came there was a more social atmosphere. Little Joe talked everything now, rather crooked and very funny. Nathan took Miss Craven out to see the beautiful poultry and the corner he had selected for a sort of greenhouse. He already had a flourishing bed of double violets.

Jenny was doing some needlework.

"Don't you ever sew or anything?" she asked Helen, who sat talking to Uncle Jason, mostly about her father, putting him in the best light and explaining the plans as far as she could.

"Well, it does beat all!" declared Uncle

Jason. "Now, no one thought your father was so awful smart when he was here, though I don't really know as Center people are much judges of book-smartness. And to think the high lights at Washington wanted to hear him talk, and that there big summer place he went to, and that he's been to Nineveh! I've read a good deal in the Bible about those old places since I had a talk with Mr. Walters one day when I went to take over a load of potatoes. And he said digging 'way down they'd found plates of clay and stone with these wonderful writings on them. I don't see how any one can doubt the Bible after that. Folks thought your father wasn't very sound in some ways, but seeing is believing for sartin. And what do you s'pose that British Museum is like? I remember going to a museum in New York when I was a young fellow, but sho! that wasn't anything very great for a man of learning."

Helen was glad not to talk about herself. She could be very interesting here; it seemed as if she was tolerably well acquainted with these old ruins, she had gone over so many descriptions of them.

"Well, it's wonderful!" Uncle Jason ejacu-

lated. "Just as the Bible said they should be for their wickedness and cruelty! A heap of ruins and all their fine palaces and gardens laid waste. And how they fought and killed each other and carried off captives, and stole the gold and silver and had no end of idols and all! Why, you can't think how excited I get reading about it. And that your father can pick out a lot of knowledge from them queer figures. It does beat all!"

Even Jenny was interested, and paused now and then with her needle and thread poised in the air, forgetting to improve each moment.

The dinner was bountiful, and Jenny managed that the serving should have a semblance of propriety at least. Sam came just in time. He was a strong, well-grown young fellow with a very manly appearance. Miss Delia Gaines was a nice, wholesome-looking country girl with a smart way of talking as if she was energetic and not likely to waste herself on trifles. Aunt Jane really approved of her, but she thought their engagement a foolish step.

Juliet Craven was much interested in this bit of family life that seemed like something she had read in a story, since she had never really seen its counterpart. What made Nathan so different? she wondered. They were happy and jolly and certainly on excellent terms with themselves and the abundant feast.

Nat was to drive the girls home again.

"You must come over and see my house," Jenny declared with hospitable pride.

"Then they had better start soon," said Nat. "The days do shorten wonderfully."

"We're just past the shortest now," subjoined his mother, "and I'm mighty glad. Give me the good, long summer days when you can get about in the morning and do something! But when I was a girl folks were up by candlelight, doing up chores and looking after cattle, and I've known my grandmother to spin before breakfast."

"They don't need to now," said Nat dryly, "so there is no excuse for burning out candles."

"Mebbe they'd be smarter if they did! It's the ruin of folks to lie abed so late."

"Unless they're smart enough to catch up afterward," laughed Joe Northrup. "Jen does. She doesn't need a candle to see her way round."

Jenny bridled her head. She was very fond of her husband's appreciation.

"You'll come over and make a little visit before you go for good," Uncle Jason whispered to Helen. "Every day I hate more and more to have you go away off there with only your father to look after you, and seems to me he never was very capable of looking after women folks. And here's a bit of Christmas for you. I'll think of you next year, too."

Helen promised with a kiss. The something in her hand was hard and round, and she knew it was a gold piece. There had never been much Christmas-giving in the Mulford family.

Jenny Northrup had the old-fashioned love and habit of displaying her house. It was prettier and tidier and more modern than her mother's. She had two new pictures she wanted Helen to see, and a fine armchair Joe had surprised her with.

Mr. Warfield had gone out to a Christmas dinner. Mrs. Dayton was entertaining two elderly cousins. So the girls went upstairs and brightened the fire, looking at each other in a rather funny fashion.

"I felt most of the time as if I was reading a story, and I almost knew what each one was going to say. Yet it was very interesting, too. That little Fanny is bright, and Nathan is a fine, intelligent boy. I never thought I could feel so at home with a boy."

Juliet laughed softly and her eyes brightened.

"I suppose you outgrow people," Helen remarked gravely, "or perhaps you never grew very far into them," with a thoughtful look in her eyes. "Uncle Jason is very dear to me, if he is unpolished."

"Don't you think it is a nice quality for people to fit their surroundings? I do. Now the Northrups seem to fit their home and its belongings. Everything has a smart, thrifty air, an air of supreme content that would never degenerate into laziness. I enjoyed it like a picture of some 'Interior.'"

"Yes, they are happy and content. Jenny has her mother's energy and her father's easy-going temper. And what of Aurelia? I didn't know you had so much discrimination."

"You are laughing at me," with deprecation.

"No, Sam will be more like his mother, more aggressive than Jenny unless Miss Gaines tones him down. But Aurelia doesn't care

for study or work of any kind. All that entertains her is reading very trashy novels of balls and parties and fine clothes and marriages and rambling listlessly through the woods, not because she loves nature, for she can hardly tell one tree from another. But I think she does know 'pusley,' as farmers call it, we've pulled up such lots of it in the garden."

Helen laughed at the old recollections. How long ago they seemed.

"There is slow development," suggested Juliet.

"I am afraid Aunt Jane will never be proud of her, or refer to her as a shining example of proper training. And now let us turn to the old ballads and read a little."

They only read a very little, for they talked of the Wilmarths. Helen could see that Juliet was wonderfully attracted.

At midnight it came on to rain and kept it up steadily all the morning, clearing up at nightfall with one broad, pale, yellow band in the sky, and after that the evening star rose, fighting its way through the clouds.

The party was very informal. There was no specially fine dressing and very few trains to trail over the uncarpeted floor. At first they were a little awkward. It was more of a task to start fun indoors.

"Oh, Helen Grant, do you know anything nice to break up the solemnity and lead off? I've been racking my brains. What did they do at your school?"

"Oh, ever so many things. There are the trees, if you are good at guessing. And the flower story—"

"Oh, what is the flower story like? After we once get going it is all clear sailing, but it's hard to start."

"One's afraid, and the other don't das't to," laughed Sue Lang, her face full of mischief.

"Won't you tell the story?" Then Meta Henderson jumped up. "Ladies and gentlemen—we can't say men and women exactly, as we haven't arrived at that dignity—Miss Helen Grant, the renowned traveler from Petropolovski will relate a story, and she asks you to supply words, names that she has mislaid on the journey. I hope you will all be willing to help her out."

Helen's face was scarlet. But she stood out in the middle of the room and smiled, though she didn't feel a bit funny, and cleared her voice. "There was once a beautiful girl whose name and the color of her hair was—"

"Marigold," suggested some one.

"And she had a sister with beautiful dark eyes—"

"Oh, black-eyed Susan," announced a

young fellow.

"Her father, believing in good habits, waked her up in the morning at—"

"Four o'clock."

That brought a clapping of the hands.

- "So they decided to run away. She had a lover whose name was—"
- "Sweet William," after much consideration.
- "And he, hearing of her sad plight, laid aside his—"
- "Bachelor's buttons."
- "And—" There followed a long pause.

"Aster," laughed one of the girls.

- "Black-eyed Susan's lover knelt before her, and she said——"
 - "Oh, Johnny Jump-up!"
- "And she gave him a beautiful flower to comfort him——"
 - "Heartsease," said a shy girl timidly.

- "And he gave her a beautiful box of-"
- "Candytuft."
- "Some one followed angrily after-"
- "Poppy!" with a shout of mirth.
- "But they had reached a parson in the woods—"
 - " Jack in the pulpit."
 - "And he rang-"
- "Canterbury bells," after much looking at each other.
- "And they were married and lived like—"
 - "Sweet pease."
 - "And their poor father turned into-"
- "Weeping willow," but others said "Bleeding heart."
- "Next," said Helen, glancing around and taking her seat. Half the fun had been the guesses, many going wide of the mark.

The ice was broken, and then they thought up some other games and played "proverbs" and "lawyer," and the Latin scholars had to declaim a Latin verse, which made no end of amusement.

After that they were all merry enough to dance the Virginia reel. Mrs. Henderson played in the room across the hall. Four of

the boys asked Helen, but three had to be refused.

"Then I'll ask for the lancers. We are going to have that afterward," said Dick Hollis. "How I wish you had come to the High School two years ago. I heard you passed a first-class examination. There's lots of fun when Mr. Warfield isn't too cross. Gee! But he does make a fellow study."

"What do you go to school for?" asked Helen, with amusement flashing out of her eyes.

"Well, I suppose to learn," rather lugu-

briously.

Len Murray asked her for the lancers.

"I'm engaged," she said with a soft touch in her voice. "But if you would like to please me—"

"Oh, you just bet!"

"Then ask my friend Miss Craven. She dances beautifully."

He was proud enough of his partner, and told Helen she was a trump, and he wished there could be a party every night.

After that some refreshments in which mottoes played a brilliant part. Then a splendid half-hour with "blindman's buff" in a ring, and it was time to break up. But the girls huddled around and said a hundred times it was a shame she had to go away.

"You're just a dear!" exclaimed Sue Lang to Helen. "But we were all a little afraid of you and thought you might be 'stuck up' with your good fortune until that day in the Library, when you were so sweet. Oh, how much you must know!"

Addison Grant would have been horrified if he had seen this crowd of girls kissing Helen. But it is quite a violent epidemic at sixteen, when life looks boundless in spite of sanitary warnings.

CHAPTER XV

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN

"WE must stay at home to-day," declared Helen, as they sat over their late breakfast. She had been describing the party very graphically for Mrs. Dayton's amusement. "And to think how soon the year will end!"

They were both rather grave at that. What she would do without her friend sent a pang to Miss Craven's heart. And the future looked so narrow to the vigorous, expanding soul under the sweet knowledge that had been growing into it with every day's unfolding, the friendships she could win, the limitless possibilities that crowd the horizon at sixteen. Yet she had no right to tug fiercely at the chain of duty, since nothing could be changed.

Mr. Conway brought her a note from Mr. Walters at noon. Her father was as well as usual and enjoying himself. On Friday they would go to Old Point Comfort and spend a week.

Her heart and her spirits rose. Even her eyes had a sudden brightness. She glanced out of the window. It had been rather rough all the morning, but now the sky was a peerless blue and the sun gilded everything.

"But it's snapping cold," said Joanna.

"We have the Library to visit. And we haven't done the stores yet. You might like to buy something as a reminder," suggested Helen.

"And—the other promise. I want to play on that splendid piano again. Can we not go?" with an entreaty in her voice.

"Yes, certainly."

"And Saturday I must return—"

"No, not until Monday." She would lengthen out the visit all she could. She would have a week to finish up all the other matters.

"Oh, but-"

"Monday will be ample time. We ought to keep our coming of the new year together."

"Do you know what I would like best of all?" There was a wistful strand in the voice and an expression of pathetic longing in the eyes.

"What?" smilingly.

"A pretty house nicely furnished. I could have that, I suppose, as I am of age. A splendid grand piano, and——"

"Well, there are always three wishes in these fairy legends. Those could be real. Don't spoil them by the yard of black pudding," with a merry laugh.

"You. If I could have you—women do sometimes live together. Oh, Helen, must

you go to England?"

"I must go," Helen said in a grave, steady tone. And it was not so much the going as

the staying.

There was a silence of some moments between them. Helen was wondering a little how it was that friends came so easily to her and were so generous-minded. Oh, if she could win all these without any special effort, could she not try for that other—should she not? Surely he needed her.

"Let us go down to the Library," she began. "And to-morrow, Mrs. Wilmarth's again. I'm hungry for music myself. Juliet, you don't half know what a wonderful gift you have."

"I'd give all, everything, for the ability to make friends as you do," the girl cried pas-

sionately, despairingly. "You give of your bright, winsome self, you are never afraid. You seem to be living out a sort of gladness all the time from within. I suppose it must have been born with you. It is different from anything at your uncle's, even Mrs. Northrup's brightness is just like a coil winding about herself, and she shakes the glitter off for you but keeps the coil securely. What was your mother like?"

"I was so little," Helen said hesitatingly. She wished she could remember delightsome things about her mother, but she pitied her now profoundly. Only it was sad not to leave a sweet memory behind.

"Perhaps it was being brought up in a crowd. You see, there are so many different tempers and ways," pondering a little.

Yet she remembered how she had gone out to the old apple tree as a child and told it her troubles. For she thought then that there were troubles to life, and she knew there were dissatisfactions. Suppose some rich girl had offered to be her sister, then? But there had been Mrs. Van Dorn.

"What are you laughing at?" inquired Juliet with a rather hurt feeling.

"Something that I thought of when I was nine or ten years old. Oh, I used to half imagine and half hope for wonderful things, but I had to work straight along. No one will ever leave me a fortune to spend just as I like."

"But the things I like do not seem to come to me," in a discouraged tone.

"Oh, yes, education is coming, and you are to try hard for that. There is your splendid musical gift that you must use for the pleasure of others. And you may find the girl you can help, the girl who needs you, who has a hard, hard time, that you can sympathize with. I'd like to be the girl, only I do not think my life has been hard enough."

It would be hard enough in the years to come. Perhaps when she was quite an old girl she might return and share this longed-for home. But she hoped Juliet would be married then and have growing girls that she could teach, for she should always love girls.

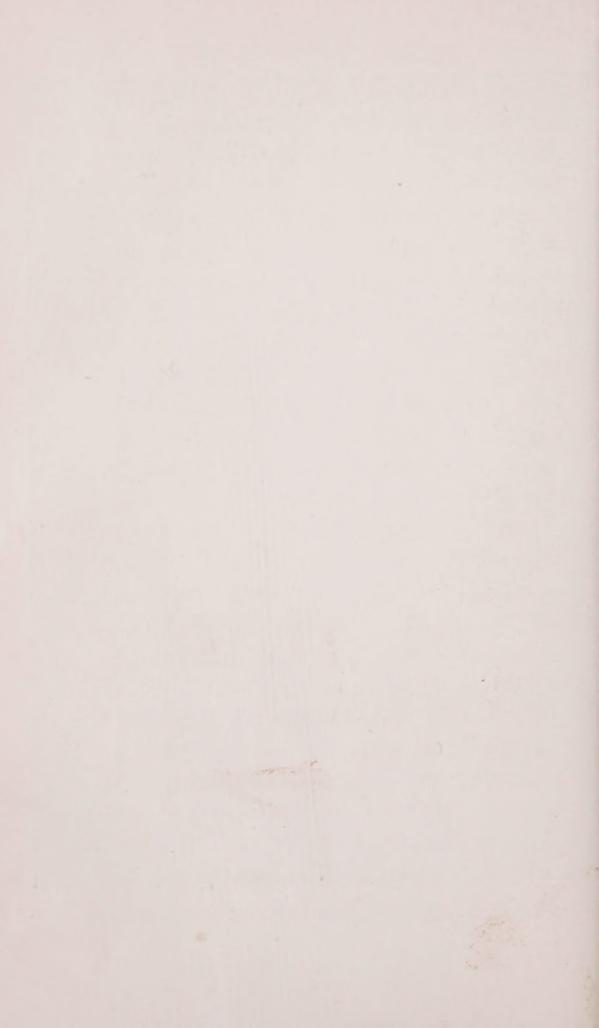
Perhaps it was the glowing sunshine that gave her spirits the buoyancy she experienced. She did not want to think there was any reprieve, or solace herself with false hopes.

"A feminine can change her mind whether



It was very cold, so still that not a twig stirred.

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she is girl or woman, and now I think we had better take the walk. The sunshine is gorgeous! We may get some new inspirations."

It was very cold, so still that not a twig stirred, and the bluish-gray smoke went straight up against the blue sky in the windless air. Pedestrians rubbed their ears and their noses. They were glad to drop in the Library, where it was nice and warm. Sue Lang and Ellen Jay were at one of the tables writing out something. Helen went over to them. The book lying open was an illustrated copy of American flowers.

"Oh, Helen, we are writing out stories like the one that you set us going with the other night!" Sue exclaimed in an eager tone. "It was just capital. I don't see how you had the courage. There's always a stupid time at the first of the party."

"Some one has to start, or it goes on being stupider. And there are laughable tales in book titles, and plays upon words like this: 'Why did the fly fly? Because the spider spied her.' "

The girls giggled softly. "What lots of things you do know," Ellen said admiringly.

"And it was just pure fun. Mrs. Henderson said she wanted the party to match the bare floor and the camp-chairs, and I guess it did. Look over my story."

"Why, that is excellent," returned Helen.

"And when you want something really fine, hunt up the fair women in Tennyson's dream of them. It is good to exercise one's wits."

"The rough, childish games have gone out of style. And you wouldn't want the big boys kissing you and laughing about it the next day."

"No, indeed," answered Helen warmly.

They found a volume of Ary Scheffer's pictures that interested Juliet, and had a nice talk with Miss Westerly in the little office den. But they did not want to prolong their walk when they emerged into the street.

Mr. Conway was home that evening and Mr. Warfield also, who was rather annoyed at not having one evening alone with them. He didn't see what Helen found to regard cordially in Miss Craven; she certainly was a backward, ordinary girl. Was it a case of opposites?

The time seemed almost to fly the last few days. There was a charming luncheon with

Mrs. Wilmarth, and Helen was very happy in some indications of the friendship that she longed for on both sides.

"And you are not a bit jealous," Mrs. Wilmarth commented with curious interest.

"You couldn't give any one my love, for there is no one exactly like me. There may be better, finer girls, and those with various charms, and you give to each the regard they awake in you."

"But isn't that being diffusive? Don't you ever want all of any one's heart?"

"I am afraid I never could command all," the girl said gravely. "And if there was one quality in me that my friend did not care for and another would enjoy, it would seem hard not to give it, to let it wither up."

"I never looked at it in that light. Yes, you might narrow your friend by too much exaction, and really defraud another."

"And you like the rose as well because it is full of blooms, and oh, was there ever anything to compare with the abundance of an old apple tree in full blossom? All the air is sweet."

Saturday noon it began to snow, and kept on until the next noon. It was a rather damp snow, for the weather had moderated, and it muffled everything in a robe of eider down, making fairyland.

"I like to read the 'Nativity' in a snowstorm," said Helen. "Let us get Milton. Oh, Mr. Warfield, have you a copy?"

"I am very glad to have something you want," he replied rather testily, and went for the book.

"No business is lawful done on Sunday," said Helen with a laugh that came from the lips only—Juliet could not guess at the pang in the brave heart—"but I am going to make a will. In a box in the storeroom at Aldred House there are books and keepsakes that I supposed I should want when I went back. I hereby deliver them into your charge, to have and to hold, to use if you will, to keep until I claim them."

Mr. Warfield came in with his handsome copy of Milton, the old one was at school. He could afford some luxuries now.

Helen's fine, intelligent reading had not been spoiled. He settled back in an armchair beside the stove, stretching out his limbs, the picture of comfort. She was by the window, and he could see every change in her expres-

sive face. She did love poetry with her whole soul. It had meanings for her that few could see or understand. Her voice lingered lovingly over certain choice words; it was tender here, it was grand and heroic there, fitted for such verse, and yet it never lost its musicalness nor made a disharmony. It was like some pure tone in an orchestra that one never lost sight of amid the ring and blare of other instruments. She might read tragedy, but she put none of it in her voice to-night. How long he remembered that correct and mellifluous tone. It carried him back to the day when the little girl had recited "Hervé Riel."

He was angry when the dinner-bell sounded. And afterward they went upstairs, while he rather ungraciously wended his way to church for the good example.

The next morning the parting came. It was sunny and bright, and the last word Juliet said was "next summer."

Helen went home to her father's room, fixed the fire, and took up her Greek. She wanted to have a good cry, girl fashion, but she choked it down. She had had her bright, sweet holiday. The old year had gone to its end in a royal manner; what else was there she could put in it? And yet she kept saying to herself, over and above the Greek:

"Old year, you shall not die; We did so laugh and cry with you, I've half a mind to die with you, Old year, if you must die."

She shook herself up presently. "No," she said, "I do not want to die. 'Hope does spring eternal in the human breast.' How full of poetry I am this morning! I'd rather go to London and spend hours in the stuffy British Museum than to go out of life, truly I would. And I may find a friend—I've been fortunate in friendships. If some things are barred out others may slip in. And there is always duty. Some one called it a 'cold, meager-faced angel.' Why didn't they dress it up with shining wings and an uplifted atmosphere. Poor father! With the new year I give all my life to you. I shall not say my whole soul, for that is God's imperishable, inalienable gift that He will require at my hands. But my energies, my attention, my best efforts to secure your affection, shall be made."

The new year came in bright and inspiriting. People were still a little old-fashioned at Hope, and made calls, at least the elders did. Helen helped Mrs. Dayton entertain them. Mr. Wilmarth gave her a joyful surprise. They talked about Juliet.

"If she were only poor now we might offer her a home, and if you had no father we might adopt you. See how our best plans are frustrated," he declared complainingly.

"It is the way with mice and men," she subjoined with a mischievous smile, but it touched her all the same.

Mr. Warfield wanted a good, long talk with her. There were so many things to say. But she evaded him in her walks if she had any, her evenings were spent with Mrs. Dayton, or some one came in. She kept very busy all the time. There was a glowing, rambling, petulant letter from Daisy Bell, who knew she did not care for her one bit. There was no dependence on a girl's friendship. She would meet some one abroad and forget that she had ever promised to love her "best of all."

She smiled over it, and yet there were tears in her eyes. Perhaps it was as well. She wrote to Mrs. Bell as truthfully as she dared without weakening herself. It would cost her dear to give up this friend, and she hoped she would not need to. She must have some of

the old loves to sustain her, and this one was wise, patient, and far-seeing, ready to bind up the bruised heart.

What curious days they were! She seemed to be holding her very breath for something that loomed vague and shadowy in the distance. She knew it was the great steamer bearing her across the ocean. There would be days out of sight of land, and in heart she would be alone on "a wide, wide sea." No, there would be some one to minister unto. There would be a new, strange life.

She wondered that she did not hear from the travelers. She said, "To-day they will come home," and every morning she brightened up the fire and rearranged little matters. Her father would have called it fidgeting about. She would not do it when they were together. She would study the things he liked without any regard to herself.

The weather had become pleasant again and melted the snow which had not been very deep, except around on the fields and sheltered places. It was Saturday morning, and she was dusting the parlor with pink in her cheeks and bright eyes. She was fond of little household tasks.

Mr. Warfield was going down to school to correct compositions and Latin exercises. He paused by the window.

"It is a lovely day again," he began.

"Looking up at the sky one might fancy it
June."

"And down at the muddy streets?" mischievously. "We might have a mishap like Thales, who had his eyes on the stars and fell into a ditch, if we kept our eyes on the blue, and we shouldn't see the stars, either."

"But we know they are there."

"Still, they are to adorn the night, like the glowworm. They are part of that impressive silence."

"We are likely to have an open winter, I think."

He was going to say "a good time for your journey," but something held him in check.

"I like the variety." She was wishing he would go on.

"What have you been doing with yourself these last three days?"

"Sewing, reading, writing out exercises, studying."

"And you have not had a walk! Yesterday was fine enough to woo out an anchorite."

She was rubbing the window pane. Across her knuckles was a row of dimples, he noted.

- "Will you go out this afternoon?"
- "I don't know. Perhaps," hesitatingly.
- "Helen, have I done anything to displease you?"

He looked very directly at her, and she could not tell why she should flush and cast down her eyes, but she answered frankly:

"Why, no."

- "Then come to walk with me this afternoon. I have not had a real talk in at least a fortnight. I have a good many things to say, and it may be a long while before we can have a chance again."
- "Oh, how solemn you are! Are you going to lecture me on frivolity? You must see that is over and done with, and that I have turned a new leaf."
- "It is the new leaf I want to talk about. Helen, you can never have a friend more interested in your welfare than I. I always have been."
- "Yes," she answered gravely. "I believe that."
 - "Say yes to my invitation."

"If it doesn't rain, or a lot of girls do not come."

"I hope the girls will stay away. They have had enough of you latterly," he said in a rather irritated manner.

"I shall have little enough of them presently. Don't grudge me anything." Then she turned and went away. Oh, could she bear any talk about her future life?

CHAPTER XVI

"YOUR FATHER KNOWETH WHAT THINGS YOU HAVE NEED OF"

HELEN went upstairs presently. She had left her little book of poems on her father's table. Beside the sweetness of the verse she could live over the delightful visit at Oakdale and her knowledge of father and mother love.

A man's step came up the stair, and there was a knock. She really frowned. Was Mr. Warfield back again? She opened the door a very little way, then wider.

"Oh, Dr. Bradford!" she cried.

He came in and shut the door.

"Oh! oh!" she exclaimed in piercing accents. "It is bad news. You have brought my father home, and he is blind!"

She remembered now hearing that Dr. Bradford had been called away some days ago. Oh, how suddenly her task had come upon her!

He took her arm and led her to the couch, seating himself beside her.

"It is bad news in a certain way," he began gravely, "but the summons comes to all sooner or later. And if he has closed his eyes on the things of this world he has opened them in a clearer vision, and is beginning to understand more wonderful mysteries than those written on clay or stone."

"Poor father! poor father!" She wrung her hands with a softened pathos, but her eyes were dry, and it seemed first like some other person's sorrow, as if she were sorry for the other person.

"Away there-alone-" she moaned.

"He did not have to suffer. And good Mr. Walters took the best care of him. It is not sudden to me, it ought not to have been sudden to him, for I warned him to be careful."

"And I was not told!" There was a hysterical catch in her voice. She thought of a dozen things she might have done or said.

"My dear child, it would not have helped any, and only added a care. I could not even tell him the absolute truth, for I think he would have started abroad at once, and if this had happened on shipboard, or soon after you had landed, and you had been left with all the trouble and sorrow among strangers—I could not endure the idea. My poor child!"

She shuddered in every pulse of her

body.

"How thoughtful you were for me," she faltered. "Tell me all. And he was count-

ing on a long life."

"When he was ill in the autumn I told him he had overworked and worn very hard on his heart. He had never been ill a day in his life, he said, and made rather light of my advice. I was very glad good old Mr. Walters desired to accompany him to New York. He may have informed you that he consulted an oculist there, who told him frankly he must not tax his eyes too severely, and that he must keep his general health up to the mark. He wanted to sail at once and was sure the sea voyage would set him up straight, but I noticed that he had lost strength and tried to put him off. I was thankful this Washington invitation came to hand. I begged Mr. Walters to persuade him to go, and, once there, to take a journey further south. They had come to be quite interested friends, you may have

observed. Mr. Walters has been a great Old Testament student, and there were many points of approximation between them, and the good clergyman felt that when he had come so near the truth he might go a little further. They went to Old Point just a week ago. He had enjoyed Washington very much, and was in good spirits except being troubled about his eyes. Tuesday morning he rose as usual and had his breakfast sent up, but complained of feeling tired and lay down again on the bed. But by night he was drowsy and moved with difficulty, and when the doctor came he said it was the end, though that might not occur in several days. He lapsed into unconsciousness, but did not seem to suffer. Mr. Walters telegraphed for me, and I went on at once. Thursday the end came peacefully. And, my dear child, there is no question but he would have gone blind if he had lived, and how would a man of his stamp and purposes have endured that? But at the longest I am certain he could not have lasted beyond spring. He had used up all his strength. And you will see presently that God was good to you in this matter. I tried to argue with him once that it would be absolutely cruel to take a girl as

young as you among strangers, his own health being uncertain, but he would not listen to reason. He was very strong-willed."

"Poor father!" she murmured again, "poor father! I don't know how to thank you for the trouble;" but her eyes were still tearless.

"There are some other things to talk about. Your mother is buried in the old graveyard at the Center, and of course he will be laid beside her. I must go over and see your uncle. It would be well to have the funeral to-morrow."

Helen bowed her head acquiescently.

"I am glad he came back since this had to happen so soon, although it makes a keener sorrow for you. And now—do you know anything at all of your father's affairs?"

"No," she answered, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "Except—there is the address of the London and New York Banking House."

"Will you get me that? I must telegraph to them. I will attend to the business."

She rose and unlocked the drawer. Fortunately he had not taken the key with him. There was an envelope containing two or three

folded papers and the printed address on the outside.

"Yes, this is what I want. Would you rather go over with me?"

"Oh, no." She seemed to shrink into her very self. "Uncle Jason will come over here."

"Yes. My dear girl, we think you have been heroic and devoted. God has ordered this thing rightly, as you will admit when you recover from the shock. I sympathize truly with you and will do all in my power to make your burden lighter."

"Oh, yes, I trust you entirely. Oh, do not think me indifferent, but I seem chilled to the very bone."

He laid her gently down on the lounge and gave her shoulder a tranquilizing pat, as one does to a weary child, then he left her to nature's soothing power.

Mrs. Dayton waylaid him in the hall.

"Oh, Doctor?" inquiringly, her eyes full of sympathy.

"She is going to take it hard-"

"But she did not want to go," the lady interrupted.

"If she had, her disappointment would

offset the other. But she will think of a hundred things, and wonder if she had always been on the right side. We none of us are. We make no end of mistakes with the very best intentions. Probably we were not meant to be all wise at sixteen. I'm nearer sixty, and I find many stakes to pull up and set elsewhere. Yet if one might give thanks it is because the wiser Judge of all has not asked the sacrifice of her young life. It does sometimes happen, and it is a mystery to me why while the young life that could be of such advantage to the world should be worn out in the service of the querulous old one. He would have gone blind if he had lived, but he simply couldn't have lived more than a few months. That was why I tried to make him put off his journey. Well, he was a queer sort of Dick, and it seems right that he should come back here to be buried. There, I must rush off to the Center. Be good to Helen, but don't bother her. She'll swing back true presently."

Helen turned over on her face to shut out the light. She had the horror of death that young, healthy vitality always has, the sudden, inexplicable change, the silence, coldness, nothingness, the awful sense that one can never come back, that all things are done forever!

Had she ever wished—was the "something" Mrs. Dayton mentioned now and then death? She had not wanted to give up all her youthful hopes and ambitions and friendships for this dreary work that did not rouse her interest as it did her father's. She was just as truthful with herself as with others. She had protested inwardly, but hoped in the final arrangement to adjust herself to her task, yet she knew it would only have been second or third best. She had faced the fact of waning sight and realized what that would entail. Oh, no, she had *not* thought of death coming in to break the bond.

Had she done everything she could? How many times she had thought of the grand old Apostle in his prison, when it seemed as if Rome needed him to go up and down its streets and speak the words of life! And she had not been a prisoner even two years! The bars were loosed and she was given back her own life, to live in her own way.

She was thankful for the remembrance of that last parting, the cold kiss upon her forehead which seemed a ray of awakening tenderness, and that she had returned it with warmth and sincerity. She would have been glad to give him a child's love, but he believed little in outward demonstrations of affection. Oh, where had she been remiss? Could she have schooled her nature to be content?

Her eyeballs were hot and throbbing, but her body seemed stonily cold, without even the movement of occasional chills. Then Mrs. Dayton came up and took her in her arms and gave her some motherly tenderness, and they cried together. There were so many comforting things that she could say, and there was the certainty of only a very short span of life remaining.

"And I do think Dr. Bradford would have made a big fight at the last to keep him here, for it seemed too dreadful to have you undergo all this sorrow among strangers."

Helen shuddered. Did any one ever have better or dearer friends in a time of trouble?

She did not come down to dinner. Soon afterward Uncle Jason arrived to take her over to the Center.

"'Twas no great surprise to me," said the

kindly man, "for you could almost hear the grave a-callin' him, he was that weak-looking. I thought when he first came he wouldn't live a month, but he was wiry, and such people go to the last and bend a good many times without breaking. An' he was likely to be blind, so the Lord knew. We're all so glad you don't have to go away. 'Twould have been no sort of life for a young girl."

He was very sweet to her, the little roughness was all on the outside. And they talked over the plans during the ride. Professor Grant would be buried from the church at two, on Sunday. Mr. Walters could come over, and Mr. McKee, the old preacher at the Center who had buried her mother years ago, would make the address.

"Seems strange-like that he should come back here to die after being away so many years, as if the Lord knew just how to bring things around. You'll feel better to have them both there together. And you've been a brave girl, Helen. I do suppose scholars and men who go so deep into queer subjects are different from common people, and don't have time for the everyday things of life."

Aunt Jane took her in the strong, warm arms and kissed her fondly.

"It's an awful shock," she said, "and you look like a ghost! No one was dreamin' of such a thing, but Dr. Bradford said his heart was almost gone when he came last summer. He had such a queer, white sort of look. Don't you want to go upstairs and lie down? I'll get 'Reely to build a fire. There's neighbors running in and out all the time an' talking—"

"Yes, my head aches," replied Helen. "How good you are," and she buried her face on the ample bosom.

"And I'll make a cup of mint tea. It's good to settle your nerves. Now be as quiet as you can."

'Reely was too awe-stricken to talk. Helen took off her gown and put on a dressing sack and lay down on the bed. The mint tea was warm and soothing. She heard the coming and going downstairs and the indistinct voices that sounded farther and farther off, and then she fell asleep.

It must be conceded that Aunt Jane was quite in her element the next day. Weddings and funerals are great events in small coun-

try places. And though she had never given plain Ad Grant much credit, Professor Grant, with several letters to his name which she didn't understand at all except they were an honor, and that organizations in cities had been ready to entertain him and to listen to his lore, was not to be dismissed quite like a common school teacher. She was curiously divided between her desire that her predictions should have come true, and a very real pride in the fact they had not. If the world honored him the Hopes might venture to.

It was really a notable funeral. Just below the pulpit the coffin stood covered with a velvet pall, and in the front seats after the family were many of the dead man's old pupils, truly proud that he had been their teacher. Neighbors came from all around, it being a leisure day and fair traveling. The church was filled. The choir sang reverently. Mr. McKee spoke highly of our fellow townsman whom they could always honor. Mr. Walters came nearer to Helen's aching heart when he mentioned the great study and attainments of Professor Grant, and that he had proved the weak points, the fallacies, the utter inability of the heathen religions to redeem the world

and restore it to a higher plane, and that through his very discoveries he had pronounced the Christian religion the best and noblest, the only true way of redemption.

Helen drew a long, quivering breath. He had once said something akin to that to her. Perhaps he did believe more than he admitted. For when death comes it is the hardest of all, the greatest pang not to have faith in the best of another life for those dear to us.

She went home with Aunt Jane, and for several days seemed very weak and crushed. Aunt Jane wondered whether there was anything left and what Helen would do now.

"It's queer how she comes just to the point of a thing, and then it drops off all of a sudden! Well, if people ain't born for luck I don't believe it will ever come to them," she commented.

After a few days Jenny took her home for a visit. It was quieter, and Nat and Uncle Jason came in every day or evening. But it seemed to Helen as if she were all at sea. She had kept at such a high tension for the past two months that the collapse was inevitable. She was not considering what she should do; it seemed as if she were stunned and could not think at all.

Dr. Bradford and Mr. Walters came over one morning, bringing her a parcel of letters and papers. Two were from Aldred House, one with a business superscription, with the caption of a noted solid review.

"Will you look over this?" asked Mr. Walters.

She cast her eyes languidly down the first page.

"I don't seem to understand," handing it to him beseechingly.

"While you are going over that I wish a little talk," began Dr. Bradford. "You must learn a few points about business, Helen," in a kindly tone. "Even a small matter has to be attended to with as much precision as greater ones. There is standing to your father's account at his banker's a sum of money that will more than cover all indebtedness, though your uncle kindly offered to supply any need. But there must be an administrator appointed, and we must learn whether he left any property in London and whether he made a will. We decided to have Mr. Walters apply. He has the leisure to attend to it, and

is more used to business methods than your uncle would be——"

"And would do anything for Miss Helen. Indeed, I call myself a very good friend of your father's, my dear, and I think I did truly appreciate him. He has afforded me much pleasure."

Helen raised her grateful eyes to him, but they were humid with tears.

"Mr. Walters will go over to Bridgeton tomorrow and make application, if you have no objection."

"Oh, no. I shall be glad of—of such a good friend," giving the doctor a faint smile.

"And see here, Helen,"—Mr. Walters' face wrinkled up with a glow of enthusiasm as he looked from her to the letter,—"here is something for your immediate consideration, very complimentary I take it, and quite to your pecuniary advantage. These review people want an article on the subject of your father's last talk in Washington. He had no notes, but do you know of anything?" studying her intently.

"I have it written out; that was his way, and then he could better understand what he wanted to use and what to omit. And a drawer full of notes on all these subjects."

"Then I don't see why you and I cannot accomplish it. You will have to come over home."

Helen brightened up. If there really was something to do. She was weary of the enforced idleness.

"Yes, I shall be glad," she replied.

"Now, if you could squeeze in with us," began the doctor with a humorous twinkle in his eye. "And we can talk business by the way."

"Yes. I will explain matters to my cousin," and she went out to the sewing room, where Jenny was busy.

"Well, yes—if it is business I suppose you must go," answered Jenny reluctantly. "Father 'll be awful disappointed; he and Nat were coming over to-night, and mother thought now you might stay quite a while. You see, Helen, we're about the only own folks you have, and we do think we ought to be a little nearer in time of trouble than just friends who are no kin. Father was speaking about the funeral expenses and all that, and said he didn't want you worried one bit—"

"There is enough for everything. Mr. Walters will be administrator—is that it?" half smiling. "I shall have to study up a little law."

"But you'll come back soon," cordially.

"I don't know how long the writing will take." Then she put on her wraps and left her good-byes for the folks at the other house.

It was a sharp winter day, with a rather rough sky and pale sunshine, but Helen felt an exhilaration in the air and a certain sense of freedom. They had all been very kind to her, but Aunt Jane's comments could not be quite divested of some of the old-time feeling, a sort of grudging surprise that Addison Grant should have attained any eminence. She still had no high opinion of so much book-learning, and rather nagged at Nat.

It was really inspiriting to be at home once more, as Mrs. Dayton's house always seemed. And when she understood the case she insisted Mr. Walters should stay to dinner, and kindled a fire at once in "Mr. Grant's room," as they all called it.

Helen and Mr. Walters had a comforting talk in the parlor. He had a serene faith for his friend; he knew only the intellectual side, the scholarship he so admired, though he had a vague idea such attainments were much above the petty rounds of life.

But to her it was an awesome thing to come to the end of a tie that should have been an affection, and wonder if there had been mistakes or negligences that were accountable for the failure to win what had seemed a duty to her.

Mr. Conway and Mr. Warfield had such a warm welcome for her that her spirits rose every moment. But they noted now how much thinner she had grown, though it was partly the effect of the black gown.

All the afternoon the two worked assiduously. Mr. Walters had a good deal of discrimination and was an earnest scholar, though a rather speculative one now. When he left her there was enough to keep her busy writing most of Saturday, and on Monday he thought they could nearly finish.

"I don't wonder your father wanted you for an amanuensis," he said in a tone of praise. "You have the aptitude of a scholar, a lover of learning. It must have been a pleasure to work with you."

It was a pleasure to have the commendation.

Her eyes shone with eager lights, and a warm color came to her cheek. If some one else had praised her! But he had said she was "a good daughter," and oh, how that comforted her now!

It was between lights, and she went out to the cheerful kitchen, where Joanna and Mrs. Dayton were preparing dinner. There were so many things to talk over that it seemed as if she must have been away a month at least. How bright everything was, with no jarring or fault-finding. And then dinner was ready.

They lingered around the table, it was so pleasant to have her back. They had truly sorrowed in her sorrow.

Then she rose and begged to be excused.

"Oh, you are not going away to work or study?" cried Mrs. Dayton, with positive objection in her tone.

"Neither. But I have a pile of letters that I have not even looked into, and I am curious, or, at least, interested. I was so taken up with Mr. Walters that I really forgot them. And I may want to answer one or two."

So with a pleasant inclination of the head she left the room.

"I do hope Mr. Walters won't feel it in-

cumbent to take up whatever work the professor left behind," Mr. Warfield said rather irritably. "Helen has had enough of the onesided business. It isn't anything that will fit her for real life."

"And I hope there will be enough money to allow her to follow out her own bent," said Mrs. Dayton. "She's been the sweetest and most devoted daughter, and all the while she has not even liked her father's plans. I do feel there was a sort of providence in all that happened, and we must all go some time," she added as an offset to the first part of her sentence.

"The best thing now will be for Helen to go in the High School at once. She can take an advanced standing. And she has quite as good friends here as she will find anywhere. I shall use my powers of persuasion to that end."

"Oh, I wish she might. Then I shouldn't lose her," and the kindly tone was very fervent.

Helen glanced the notes over. Letters of condolence, brief and rather awkward, from some of the girls, tender and sympathetic from Miss Westerly, and touching from Mrs. Wil-

marth, who begged her to come and spend a week with her. Mrs. Bell's brought tears to her eyes. She laid it by to read over again, and she did read it many times.

There were Daisy's and Juliet's, her two dearest girl friends. Juliet's would be long, with some queer speculations and involved sentences, so she opened Daisy's.

It was written the second day of her return to school, before the sad tidings had reached either of them. And it was an angry, passionate, upbraiding letter, accusing her of insincerity, unfaith, disingenuousness, and almost everything an unreasonable, disappointed girl could say.

"And I really had coaxed mamma for an invitation. We couldn't accommodate many guests from a distance, but I had made it all nice and right for you. Everybody wanted to see you so. And I could have excused you for some reasonable cause, but that you should have had another purpose in your heart all the while, another plan, you deceitful girl! I should feel better if you had said right out, 'I've asked Miss Craven to come and spend Christmas with me.' And she, the sly thing, never said a word but that she was going to

remain at Aldred House. And you had her a whole week! Oh, I suppose you had a lovely time, and you never gave me a thought! Then she must come and flaunt her good time in my face, but I finished her in short order. I wouldn't listen to a word. I told her she might have you and keep you, that I never wanted to hear from you or see you again. So when you get to London you need not write, for I should put the letter in the fire unread. You can have your dear friend and she can have you. I shall have no difficulty in filling your place, believe me, but I do hope the next friend I make will be truthful and faithful, without any pretense."

Helen's face was scarlet and her eyes shone with an unwonted light as she glanced across the room, almost imagining Daisy stood there in her unreasoning tempest. There had been a mistaken suspicion. When she had declined the invitation she had not even thought of asking Juliet, she had not known that her father would remain away, neither had Miss Craven received it. There had been no deception whatever on either side.

She had mailed the paper with the notice of her father's death to Daisy as well as to Juliet, but the former had vouchsafed no word. It was so unjust when Daisy might have known the truth, if she had listened to Juliet's explanation.

Then she turned to Juliet's sweet and comforting words. She explained the misadventure, that Daisy had flared up and would not listen to the fact she tried to set before her, that she had not received the invitation until in the Friday evening mail and after Daisy had gone home. Afterward she had written a note and sent it to Miss Bell's room, only to have it returned unopened. And Juliet said in a nobly unselfish way: "I love you well enough to give you up for the present, if that would mend matters between you two, for I know now in my heart I could trust your love if we exchanged no word for months. Tell me what you would have me do, dear, dear friend, and I shall show my sincerity, my affection for you by doing it."

There was much about the pleasure of her visit to Mrs. Wilmarth, and a delicately administered comfort for the loss that had come to Helen. Perhaps out of her own experience of an unloved life Juliet could understand without explanations, Helen thought.

"It is the better friendship of the two," she mused. "Daisy will have a life full of pleasure, and she does make friends easily; Juliet is diffident and thinks she has so little to offer any one. Yes, whatever comes I shall keep to her. But it seems as if I managed to get between two fires with my friends. Mr. Warfield did not like Mrs. Van Dorn, and Aunt Jane is half jealous of Jenny, and now there is Mr. Walters, who no doubt will stir up some one else."

CHAPTER XVII

MARCHING ON TO THE NEXT

It seemed quite like old times to sit here and write. No one frowned a little if she straightened up and drew half a dozen long breaths. Oh, if he had known—if people only knew how much easier work was when cheerfulness and appreciation made a sunshine about. There was mental sunshine. And all last week she had been in a mental cloud, but it was mostly sorrow for lost opportunities. She asked herself what she could have helped. But Mrs. Bell said she must leave behind the things that were not her fault and press forward.

Some time after dinner Mr. Walters came in. The business had been all arranged at Bridgeton. Monday he would go to New York and then send to London. But it would take quite a while to get things in train.

She had copied half the article very nicely. Then they planned out the rest. He was sincerely glad she could have it finished by Monday night, for it was important to have it sent as soon as possible. Helen worked very industriously.

About mid-afternoon Mr. Walters returned. There was quite an account in the city to be drawn upon, and there would be something left after all expenses had been paid.

"Miss Helen," he said, "I have been considering another matter. After I gave up active work, and just then my wife's health was very poor and she wanted to come here among her people, to die as she thought," smiling, as she had recovered instead, "I began to interest myself very much in Jewish history and especially the historical books of the Bible. I wrote several articles that were very well received. Then I started on a more pretentious work. I have been very much interested in discussing some of these points with your father, though we could not altogether agree. But he knows now, and no longer sees, through a glass, darkly. What I am coming to is this: There may be some facts very useful to me among your father's papers, for he never settled to anything without having it thoroughly authenticated. There

was no guesswork with him. And if we could go over them, and you would allow me to select what I liked, indeed, assist me a little, I might really achieve my idea. I have had an offer for the book to-day, and it quite inspired me."

His wrinkled face was all in a glow and his eyes shone with delighted interest.

"Oh, anything I could do would be so willingly done!" cried Helen eagerly. "You have been so kind. And I am glad you sought out father and were such a real friend to him, were with him to the last. I can never forget that. He was not a man to make friends easily."

"Oh, my dear child, I am thankful I could do it for your sake. But it gets late, so I will be over to-morrow, and we can arrange some of the plans. You will be invaluable."

"Oh, thank you!" and she pressed his hand. She was really happy again, and she had to try not to be lighthearted. Then all the autumn had not been quite wasted! She could do something for a friend while she was waiting to see what would come next. What did she want?

It would be embarrassing to go back to

school even if she desired that. She had answered Juliet's letter and written to Mrs. Bell without adverting to Daisy. To the girl she had sent a straightforward refutation.

The next day she and Mr. Walters went over the papers, which were mostly notes in her clear hand.

"I will take them home with me. Helen, suppose you come with me. My wife will be very glad to make your acquaintance. She has had a warm sympathy with you. And I shouldn't feel at home here; indeed," smiling, "I am afraid I should not be able to work anywhere else save in my study. It is a very cozy place."

"I shall be glad to meet her." Helen was soon wrapped up, and they walked off together. The breeze brought the olden color to her cheeks, and the half smile so natural to her lingered about her lips.

Mrs. Walters had certainly outgrown her delicacy. She was inclining to stoutness now, and her abundant hair was snowy white. A pleasant face, with still bright dark eyes, and a low, cheerful voice gave the young girl a welcome that went to her heart.

Two daughters were married and settled in

the town, and a small granddaughter of eight or so spent most of her time with them. The house was a large, old-fashioned place of a story and a half, with a high peaked roof over the main part that gave nice sleeping chambers.

"And this is my study," leading Helen through a short hall at the end of the sitting room. "Pretty fair den for an old fellow, isn't it?" glancing at her with mirthful eyes.

It had a big fireplace with a high mantel, ornamented with curious pitchers and jugs. All one side was shelved for books. Then there was a cabinet full of curiosities, a grandfather clock, a capacious lounge, and some easy chairs, a large desk in the middle of the room with a row of drawers at either side, and a top like a library table, strewn with papers and magazines. There were some fine pictures as well.

"Oh, it is just enchanting!" cried Helen, her face beaming with pleasure.

"I haven't much to do now except the secretaryship of a widows and orphans' fund, and now and then to go and preach for some friend who wants a rest. So I amuse myself with my book, but now I shall begin in good

earnest. How shall we take it up? Will you come over in the morning? One feels fresher then."

"Yes, I should like that, though it would be whatever time suited you. And I am gratified to be really busy, if I can be of service to you," her shining eyes betraying her satisfaction.

"There is no doubt of that. Why, you have made me feel quite like a young fellow, or a genius, instead of a rather lazy old fellow," laughing.

Mrs. Walters insisted on her staying to supper, but she had said she would be home. She would come over Thursday morning.

This was almost at the end of Beech Street. Some three blocks further north the Wilmarths lived. She would have time for just a few moments' call.

Mrs. Wilmarth was watching at the window.

"I saw you go by with Mr. Walters," she said, "and I've been wondering if you meant to come back before dark. Oh, my dear, dear girl!"

For some moments neither spoke, and when

they gained courage to glance at each other, both had their eyes full of tears.

"I must talk fast," Helen began, "for I promised Mrs. Dayton I would be home to dinner." Then she went briefly over what had occurred during the last few days. Her tone was almost joyous at the prospect of having something to occupy herself with.

"Thursday!" Mrs. Wilmarth subjoined.
"Then why can you not come to me to-morrow? Though I shall not give up my whole week."

"Yes, I could," with a lingering sweetness in her voice.

"I was afraid they might keep you over to the Center. You have grown thin, Helen. It has been a sad time—but we will talk of that to-morrow."

"Yes, for I must say good-night."

"Mr. Wilmarth will be disappointed because I did not keep you."

She smiled and then flashed out in the hall, down the steps, and waved her hand to the figure at the window. There was an exultant feeling in her heart and a song of praise that some one, more than one, should love her.

She had so much to tell Mrs. Dayton that

without any special intent they sat out in Joanna's tidy kitchen until it was bedtime. She was so bright and hopeful between the two new real friends that she suggested the little girl who had come over from Hope Center to wait upon Mrs. Van Dorn and do whatever else she was bidden. And Mrs. Dayton, who had nearly always found her interest in other people's lives, had no jealous feeling or fear that she should be pushed aside to make room for some one else. Out of all the combinations of circumstances that had evolved, her finger had first set the wheel in motion, but she was not going to check it at any point because it might go past her a little. Some memories they held in common that could not well belong to any one else.

The day at Mrs. Wilmarth's had quite a different atmosphere. Here Helen found much that she could minister to. And though she could confess her own personal insights and imaginations, and though they talked of sorrow and death, the elder was really proud that Helen's father had reached a point of distinction. There was a delicate reserve on the girl's part of all that could depreciate her

father in her listener's estimation. She did not like to think of it herself.

She explained the agreement she had made with Mr. Walters, and how glad she was of an interest just now, when it seemed best to wait until further developments.

"Then you can drop in to luncheon often, and we can have an afternoon of music and poetry. You can hardly realize how lonesome I get, and how useless life seems some days of depression. If I had a niece who could come to me, or a sister who missed being married," and Mrs. Wilmarth gave a peculiar, softened expression, like a smile that hardly dared venture out. "I wouldn't want to keep any one from marriage and a happy home of her own, but if she had had a disappointment, for instance, and fallen back on friendship, we might do a good deal for each other."

There was such a tender longing in the tone that it touched Helen as it had times before.

"If you only knew Miss Craven well," she ventured.

"But she has all that money. It might seem as if I wanted to influence her in some way. My imaginary girl must really need me, and be glad of a home. Oh, what foolishness in a body going on to middle life!"

"I beseech you not to grow any older," laughed Helen. "Some day I may want to be the girl myself."

"I only wish that might be," was the earnest reply.

Helen was interested at once in Mr. Walters' plans the next morning. He read her a synopsis of his story of the Jews. Many places in it he had marked for revision since he had talked with Professor Grant. He looked at it from the religious side, a corroboration of Biblical history, the truth of the predictions and punishments of God's chosen race, and their marvelous rescue from total destruction. The new discoveries added a zest that gave it the aspect of positive romance. It did appeal strongly to Helen, and instead of the half-day they spent a whole one, for Mrs. Walters came in when luncheon was ready with a cordial insistence in her invitation, and Helen assented.

"But we will not work this way," he said when he bade her good-bye. "You have been an inspiration, and I cannot afford to wear you out." "I scarcely feel tired at all, you have made it so interesting." And certainly her face showed no trace of weariness.

"I don't wonder the professor wanted to take her with him to London," he mused, watching her trip lightly up the street. "But it would have been hard on her."

She was thinking of her father too. If they could have worked this way together!

On Saturday Uncle Jason made his appearance early. Days were short, and he wanted to get home before dark.

"Why, Helen, how you've freshened up!" he exclaimed in surprise. "But it was a sorrowful week."

"Don't you want to take me back with you?" she asked in a bright tone. "I didn't finish my visit."

"No. Mother felt—well, a little hurt, for she was counting on quite a time with you."

"It was business, and really, Uncle Jason, I've come to be quite an important person," laughing as she squeezed his arm. "I shall have to come back on Monday morning, for I have undertaken some work for Mr. Walters, very much like what father was training me

for. He thinks it is best not to make any plans until we have heard from London."

"Well, we'll all be glad to have you, especially Nat and your old uncle. Now, if you could go right off, and didn't mind my peddlin' about, then I wouldn't have to drive round this way again."

"I can get ready in five minutes, so sit down and wait."

She explained the matter to Mrs. Dayton, changed her gown, and as she stepped into the wagon Mr. Warfield came up the walk. She waved her hand gayly.

"Where has Helen gone?" he asked almost crossly of Mrs. Dayton.

"Over to the Center to stay until Monday."

"She runs around wild nowadays, which is a bad thing for her if she means to do anything worth while with her education. She does need a strong hand. I don't wonder her father kept her pretty close."

"And I think she needs all the liberty she can have for a while," was the spirited return. "I'm not afraid of her getting frivolous. And she's likely to be kept pretty busy for a while."

"About something that is of no earthly use," he said in a very short tone.

He had some plans that it seemed as if she must understand were for her immediate benefit. She could enter school with an advanced standing, and in another year graduate, he was quite certain. He could do a great deal for her, would do it because she was so much in earnest. Study was a delight to her. She could inspire others. He did not mean to stay forever in this little town, and he was ambitious to have a record for good work done.

He had spent the morning over school work, and was tired and a little out of temper at some poor exercises when he had expected much better. Did children, young people who ought to look a little at the serious side of life, care whether they really learned anything or not? It was disheartening.

Helen meanwhile snuggled herself down under the blanket and the old, moth-eaten buffalo robe, for it was a wintry day with a sharp north wind. Fortunately it would be at their backs going home. She took up the story of the time she had left her cousins, and rehearsed the incidents in a most entertaining manner. Now and then he gave a soft chuckle. She was so like the Helen of

other times, seeing a bright side to everything.

"And you're going to help the old dominie! Well, I do declare! Next thing you'll be writing a book of your own!"

"If I do it won't be on ruins, or wars and fighting," she returned gayly.

Nat came to help her out as they drove round, and gave her a cordial greeting. "I'll put up the horse, father," he said. "You go in and get warm."

Aunt Jane was scolding. Aurelia was crying. Fan and Tom were playing "tit-tattoe" on the slate, and occasionally the pencil gave an unearthly squeak.

"Children, put up that slate. You're too old for such nonsense. And, 'Reely, if you don't stop snifflin'—oh, Helen, you drop down on one like a ghost!"

Tom made a grab at her that nearly capsized her. Fan stood ready for the next hug.

"Just put your hat and coat in the sewing room, Helen. I declare, I was hurt about your goin' off without a word, but I s'pose one couldn't gainsay a doctor and a parson. 'Reely, you look after the potatoes. Fan, begin to set the table. I've worked all day long and

haven't had time to change my dress. 'Reely's the tryin'est thing I ever did see; she's Mulford through and through."

Aunt Jane went into the washroom and tidied herself up a little. Helen answered questions, pulled the table-cloth around straight, put on some dishes, asked Aunt Jane for one of her big aprons, which pleased her mightily, and somehow things seemed to lose their general contrariness and the atmosphere cleared. The piece of roast pork came out of the oven browned to a turn, and Aurelia made the gravy.

Nat came in, washed his hands, and took an old account book down from the clock shelf, saying, "Now, pop, before you forget," and Uncle Jason began to enumerate the articles disposed of—eggs, butter, poultry, apples, and potatoes.

"Come to dinner!" exclaimed Aunt Jane.

She had felt quite affronted at first that Nat should want to know what she called the "ins and outs of everything," but he declared he wanted to ascertain whether farming paid before he went into it largely.

"It paid before you were born!" snapped Aunt Jane, "and I don't s'pose you brought an overload of wisdom with you. Children seem to be all smartness or all stupidness now-adays, and the smartness doesn't amount to much."

But in the main the dinner passed off pleasantly. There was less confusion and disputing. Aurelia sighed now and then, and her eyes were red and swollen, but it did not interfere with her appetite. Uncle Jason humorously instructed Nat to see that the hens did their full duty next week, for most people's hens seemed on a strike, and he had taken so many orders he was afraid he had forgotten some.

"Now you sit down and take a rest, Aunt Jane, and we'll clear away the dishes," Helen said cheerily.

Nat had been stirring up the fire in the sitting room, so she went thither. Helen lighted the lamp, and Uncle Jason took out his paper, but he soon nodded over it. Fan wondered if Helen knew anything about the taking of Quebec that was in their Monday's lesson, and Tom had gone astray on the least and the greatest common divisor. Aurelia preserved a sort of sullen silence, but presently everything was straightened up and Helen was

doing sums in troublesome fractions for Tom when Sophy came to the door.

"Mis' Northrup wants her mother right away," she announced. "Mr. Northrup's got to go out."

Aunt Jane went on the porch and talked to her a brief space. Then she told her to come in and wait while she changed her dress and put on her "things."

"I'll walk over with you, mother," said Uncle Jason.

"Helen," she began in a low tone, "I may not be back until morning. I declare, it's just a providence that you came over. Try and keep things a little straight. And, children, you mind whatever Helen says."

Nat took up his father's paper, Tom was sleepy and went to bed, Fan declared she was wide awake as an owl, but she leaned her head down on the cushion of another chair.

"What was it, Aurelia?" Helen asked tenderly. The girl began to cry.

"I just wish I was dead. I'm tired and sick of living where no one cares a bit about you and you can't have a minute to yourself, and you've everlastingly got to hear what mother did before she was twelve years old,

and what Jenny did. They are smart, of course. That's the Cummings' blood. And I'm all Mulford. I don't care! Father's the best of the whole bunch. And I didn't make myself!"

"I think we make a little of ourselves every day," Helen returned gently.

Aurelia stared. "Well, I never! I don't see how."

"By doing or not doing. When we evade the things we ought to do, we weaken the habit of obedience until we are full of revolt, and everything comes hard, and when we do those things we know to be wrong that habit grows upon us until we almost make ourselves believe it isn't very bad. So you see we do make many of our faults permanent."

"Did you always mind mother when you were here?"

Helen laughed. "I confess I did not always. Then I found it was better to do most things right away, and if there was any time left over you could have that."

"Mother doesn't leave any over. She's at you all the time. I'm a big girl now, and I ought to do a little as I like."

"What would you like to do?"

"Oh, read, read, and go to parties and have some fun. I'm old enough. Letty Breen had a party last week, but mother wouldn't let me go. She told me all about it Sunday. They played games and had no end of fun. And cake and lemonade and candy and motto-snaps—that you take hold of and pull. It was awful mean to have to stay at home."

"And was that the trouble to-day?"

"No, that was about a book. Letty lends them to me. They're just beautiful. Don't you love stories?"

"Yes," assented Helen, "but I can't spend much time over them."

"I s'pose you have to learn a lot of things. I'm not going to teach school, but get married the very first chance I have."

"But the book?" leading her back to the subject.

"Letty lent it to me. I'd done all the upstairs work and cleared up the dinner dishes and mopped up the floor. Mother was taking her nap. I'd had the book hid in the stocking-bag, and I thought I might read just a little. I don't see as it's any worse than wasting your time sleeping. And I did so want to finish the chapter. She'd run away from her husband,

—and he was splendid, too,—but she thought she didn't love him. And then he hunted her up in disguise, making believe he was poor, and she took an awful fancy to him. They were just coming to an explanation, and I did forget everything, when mother bounced out and snatched the book, and, though I told her it was Letty's, she put it in the fire. I tried to save it, but she slapped me, and then we had a real quarrel. I'm going in the shop as soon as spring opens—father says I may—and then I'll read all the books I want to."

"You won't do much work or earn much money."

"I don't care. Letty says your parents have to take care of you until you are eighteen. I'm going for the fun and to get rid of housework. I just hate it."

"But if you are married, what then?"

"I won't keep house. I'll board."

Helen felt helpless, while her heart was full of pity for the poor girl. What could she say that Aurelia would understand? She was not naturally intelligent, and Aunt Jane's system had crushed rather than fostered ambition of any sort. There was no reward, for she really never earned any, and Aunt Jane could appre-

ciate industry. Another girl like Jenny would have delighted her. She did vent some of her disappointment upon the poor child. And oh, how hard it was to work without any commendation. Helen understood that better now.

"I do think, Aurelia, that I'd try to get my part of the work done on time, not dawdle over it," she began thoughtfully.

"And then just have a lot more poked at you! That's the way it works, Helen."

Oh, that was true enough.

"When you were here and we were little it was kind of divided up, you see, but now Fan isn't made to do much of anything because she has lessons. And mother thinks because I am big and stout I can work all the time."

"But she works as well. And most people do in this world. It is always something. It is really the law of life. It is what God has appointed for all of us."

"Jen doesn't work so awful hard. Why can't mother keep a girl?"

"Would you do enough sewing to pay the girl's wages?"

"I don't know how. And then in the even-

ing Joe sits and reads stories to her. I'd darn stockings if some one would read stories to me."

- "Wouldn't Nat?"
- "I don't care for the stupid old things he reads. They're about farming and men who have built bridges and made machinery and what not."
- "At least I would not borrow the kind of books my mother did not want me to read. And most of those novels are not about ordinary life, such as we have to live. Jenny is very nice and happy, but her life isn't a bit romantic."
- "I shouldn't want it!" and Aurelia tossed her head.
- "What are you girls talking about?" said Nat, coming out to them. "Is 'Reely rehearsing her woes? I recommend good, honest work for most of them."
- "And some play, some companionship," began Helen eagerly. "Nat, can't you find interesting stories to-read to her, and can't you and she talk over the things you like?"
- "Well, you see, we don't like the same things. And I can't abide that Letty Breen. You should have heard her talk about your

going to London. She supposed you'd be right in among the lords and ladies, and the queen would invite you to dinner. Such rot as they talk! Oh, 'Reely, do have a little sense, and don't be such a cry-baby! I'm going out to the barn, and then I'll walk on to meet father."

He did not have to walk very far. Mother would stay all night; Jenny wasn't very well. Then the fires were banked for the night, Fanny roused, and they all went to bed. Helen shivered a little in the cold room and wondered if there was anything she could do to awaken Aurelia to a sense of real living.

They had a rather merry breakfast the next morning. Helen made Aurelia pour the coffee while she baked the cakes.

"I don't know how you do it," commented Nat, "but this kitchen isn't half as full of smoke as the other folks make."

"That is in the know how," returned Helen.

"The philosophy of inanimate things is to find out the best and easiest way of doing them."

"Cakes seem to me real, live, jolly things when they're hot," said Tom, at which they all laughed.

Nat and Helen went to church. Here her

father's coffin had stood, just here she had listened to the kindly words said over him, and prayed fervently that he might indeed have seen the great light that beckoned to all who raised their eyes to it.

One and another greeted her cordially. Then she led Nat out to the old churchyard in the rear, and they stood by the dreary mound that no kindly turf had yet covered. Her mother had a small headstone. If she could put up a monument—if she might use the proceeds of that review article for it!

They walked along silently, the people dropping off until they were quite alone. The path was rough, just as it had frozen up after a thaw.

- "I wish-" she began, glancing at Nat.
- "Is it anything I can do?" in a ready tone.
 - "It's about-Aurelia."
- "Well, you'll have to let her go," the boy said decidedly.
- "Something ought to be done to rouse
- "You can't rouse her. She'd like to sit and read those foolish novels all day long. I've found some of them out at the barn, and threatened to tell mother, but I didn't. I do

hate to hear so much scolding," and Nat drew his brows into a sharp frown.

"But if you could interest her in something better—"

"No, I can't. Mother and she ought to get along, for they both despise book-learning, and you don't know how hard I have to fight with myself and for myself. Helen, I wish I could have gone to school another year, but father needed me and mother nagged. I like the farm and the stock and trying experiments, but I don't mean to be a country clod, rough and uncouth. It doesn't help you to plow a furrow any straighter. And when you are keeping watch over yourself and trying to get into nice ways, and curb your temper and study up the things you want to know, you really haven't time to take any one in hand who doesn't care. That's why country people are so common—they don't care. Any old way is good enough. But it isn't for me."

"Oh, Nat!" Helen caught his hand as it swung forward.

"I mean to be a first-class farmer some time. Tom will be some sort of a mechanic, and he's a smart little lad. Fan is fond of her books and stands high in her classes. But 'Reely is a sort of black sheep—perhaps she's all Mulford," and he gave a short laugh. "But I think father's a pretty good sort. I wish we had you—no, I don't, either, it would be dreadful for you. And, Helen, you're a trump all the way through. I should say you were all Grant, but now and then you suggest father. You've such a pleasant way of passing over things instead of bristling up!"

Helen smiled up at him, but the tears stood in her eyes as she returned:

"He's been a good father to me, and I love him."

"And he loves you—oh, we all do for that matter. You ought to hear mother set you up to 'Reely every now and then. And if you should ever go away again I want you to find time to write to me. There are so few people you can talk to straight up and down without cutting off corners."

"We will always keep friends," said Helen firmly.

CHAPTER XVIII

MORE THAN ONE SURPRISE

AUNT JANE sat by the kitchen stove, her skirt turned carefully the wrong side up lest it should meet with some untoward spatter. 'Reely had finished dishing up, Fan was placing the chairs.

"We thought you had been asked out to dinner!" she exclaimed rather tartly. "Seems to me one needs to walk fast to keep warm."

Nat gave a pleasant laugh and said: "How are they?" indicating the direction with his head.

Early Sunday morning a little daughter had come to the house of Northrup.

Mrs. Thompson, on whom they had depended, could not come until Monday noon.

"And I must go back," declared Aunt Jane.

"Joe is as good as a girl. Jen's got him trained splendid. But that Sophy hasn't any more head than you have, 'Reely—you'd make a good team. I'm sure I don't know what

you'll do, Monday being washday. You could get the clothes rubbed out, 'Reely."

"Don't worry, Aunt Jane," Helen counseled cheerfully, "I shall stay all night if Nator uncle will drive me over about nine, so that I can get to work."

"How much are you going to be paid for this work? I hope you're not such a silly as to work for strangers for nothing!" rather captiously.

"Oh, I shall be well paid," and Helen smiled radiantly.

"Have you heard whether your father left anything there in London? Though I dare say he willed it all to that—that show place."

"Museum," appended Helen with serene grace. "No, we have not heard."

"Well, I do hope he hasn't spent all these years working for nothing!" declared Aunt Jane.

After the dinner, which was really pleasant, Helen said the children had better get ready for Sunday-school, and she would clear the table. Aunt Jane demurred, and declared there was no need of 'Reely's going, but Helen managed it. 'Reely was given many charges

as to what she was to do to-morrow morning, and to be sure to come straight home and help Helen with the supper. Aurelia listened with a half-sullen demeanor and went to dress, for dinner had been a little late. Helen set about her work deftly, though Nat insisted upon drying the dishes. Then the elders went over to the other house, Aunt Jane wishing rather fretfully that Helen could find time to stay a whole week with her own folks.

After that Helen and Nat had a lovely long talk. How shrewd and intelligent he was, how ready to take suggestions, how ambitious to be one of the best farmers anywhere around. He was so interested in trees and small fruits, but the thing that touched the girl's heart the most keenly was his affection for his father and the warm friendship between them.

The smaller ones came straight home, but Aurelia did not make her appearance until supper was ready.

"Pretty time, this!" exclaimed Nat.

Aurelia laughed irritatingly.

"You might as well be scolded for something as nothing," she flung out. "In two years more I'll do just as I like."

"Not in this house," returned Nat dryly.

"Children, let's think of a verse of a hymn," said Helen. "I'll begin and then you, Nat."

That made a diversion. After the table was cleared Helen proposed to read a library book aloud. Fan and Tom were delighted listeners and brought some stools close, so they could put a hand on Helen's knee. Aurelia went fast asleep, and Nat smiled over to his cousin with a bit of mischievous triumph in his eye.

By nine the next morning the house was in order; the children had gone to school, Nat had driven Helen over to Mr. Walters', Aurelia had filled the tubs with clothes and exhumed an old novel. She sat so she could see her father coming from the barn or any interloper straying down the walk.

The fresh, rosy girl was like a picture as she entered Mr. Walters' study. And though at first she had some difficulty in keeping her mind on her work, for her two days' experiences would intrude, she made a vigorous effort.

She kept very busy all the week. In Saturday's mail there was a big foreign letter, and it had an inclosure for her. This was a complimentary note of condolence and regret at the news of the sudden death of Professor Grant, who was one of the most valuable and highly esteemed members of the staff of his department, and who would be greatly missed.

"Oh, read this!" she said to the clergyman.

"That certainly is very appreciative. You must cherish that carefully. And now listen to this."

Professor Grant had been in the habit of letting his salary stand and drawing on it as he needed. There was somewhere about five hundred pounds, and on inquiry there seemed no claims against it. He left no will, but a sort of memorandum signed without any witnesses, that all papers, translations, keys to languages, and inscriptions that he had deciphered should become the property of the Museum. As he had left an heir, and as this was not an attested will, it would need to be determined by some proper authority how binding this was.

"Couldn't I give it?" asked Helen thoughtfully.

"Of course, my child. That would be the

handsome thing to do. But they may be valuable," studying her with penetrative eyes.

"I should like to do exactly what father wished. It is a comfort to obey him in this. I can think of times when I really hesitated and shrank, but I shall do this with the greatest pleasure."

"And the money! My dear Helen, I am thoroughly glad for your sake," and he took both hands in his, pressing them warmly. "What are you thinking of?"

"That I can go to college. Oh, see how utterly lovely things, events, come out for me! I was just wild to get over here to the High School. I would have paid my board in domestic service. And then came that splendid gift, the two years at Aldred House. And I've been wondering how long I would have to teach to save up money enough to go, or if I could darn stockings and mend clothes for other girls, and tutor them at so much an hour, or whether I'd borrow the money and pay it afterward. But one might die."

"And you are resolved to go?" looking her all over with the kindliest eyes and friendliest smile.

[&]quot;Yes, yes," and she suddenly went pirouet-

And what a charm there was in her smile, her tone, in the gesture of her hand.

"Oh, pardon me!" she cried remorsefully, stopping before him with fascinating penitence. "I was so happy I forgot. In a minister's study, too! How could I be so thoughtless!"

"My dear, I am glad you did it. I shall always remember what a picture of delight you made. You are the sort of girl to go to college. Why, I would lend you the money myself. And if the book is a success you must have your share of the profits, and if it isn't you must be paid for your labor. Helen, I am very glad for you. Now let us go out and tell Mrs. Walters the good news."

She rejoiced with Helen, since she wanted to go, but she was not such a great believer in colleges.

"And in the meanwhile?" he asked presently.

"I should not be ready to enter this autumn unless the most important examination was on the ruins of Assyria, and oh, there are some really beautiful legends. But I thought they might take me in Aldred House next year and

let me teach some and study up. The certificate admits to most colleges."

"Well! well! Helen, you would make a good general if you were a man," and his tone was one of admiration.

"Then I would go to West Point, and the country would give me my education—only, I should like to fight the peace battles. I couldn't kill any one."

He laughed with half-suppressed merriment.

"We are so demoralized now that we cannot work until Monday," she said with gay decision. "So I shall go and tell Mrs. Wilmarth the good news."

"Helen, you will need to have a guardian, you really will, now that there is an estate. It's only a sort of form, but necessary. John Wilmarth would be good."

"But you-"

"I hold until the estate is settled. That may take a year. Then I can turn all over to him. He is a younger man, and they are both deeply interested in your welfare. Wilmarth is upright and a man of good judgment. I'll sound him."

"I wonder if any one ever had so many

lovely friends," and her eyes were limpid with emotion.

"You deserve them all, child. Fortune may descend upon one, but I think staunch and true friends seldom come to the unworthy."

She breathed a little prayer that she might never fail to be worthy.

They would fain have kept her to luncheon, but she could not be persuaded.

"I suppose," she said demurely, as she was going away, "the guardian will have to look sharply after my patrimony that I do not waste it in riotous living?"

"Exactly," laughing. "I shall give him warning."

It seemed to Helen as if she were walking on air, her heart was so light. Almost at the door she met Mr. Wilmarth.

"Hillo!" he exclaimed. "What has happened? Your face is radiant. Is the book done?"

"Do I carry my secrets so plainly in my face?"

"You carry happiness to-day, and I am glad. Mrs. Wilmarth was wretched yester-day. She watched for you and missed you."

"I went round by the Library."

He let them both in with a latchkey. He always came home to luncheon on Saturday, as sometimes he was busy all the evening.

Mrs. Wilmarth was heavy-eyed and had the remnant of a headache. But she was delighted to see Helen.

"And now explain," he began, when they were seated. "When I met this young woman a few moments ago her joy fairly illumined the street. I suppose the book is done. You were afraid to break the news at once."

"No, it isn't done. I am glad there is something to steady me. But there came a letter from abroad this morning, and—it makes me not quite a penniless girl."

"And you are so glad over a little money? Oh, Helen!"

She colored vividly and her eyes drooped.

"There, I was only teasing you. I shall be glad for your sake of every penny your father left. I suppose it is that. I wish it might be a fortune."

"It is not a very large fortune, but it will enable me to follow out my dearest wish, and I have thought sometimes that perhaps God had another plan for me. Such queer, lovely things are always happening to me."

Every line in her face was full of the glad hopes of youth, and was irresistible in its hap-

piness.

"College, of course. I don't know but I should have had the courage to go around with a subscription paper and get enough to send you, knowing how your heart was set upon it."

"Why, have I talked so much about it?" in surprise.

"No, but the few things you said went to

the point. Now let us hear about it."

She explained the matter in a straightforward fashion, as much pleased, it seemed to them both, with the appreciation of her father as of the small sum he had left behind.

"I am very glad for your sake and his, too, for it is a consolation to leave some enduring work behind one. I should like to stay and rejoice with you all the afternoon, but duty calls, so you and Mrs. Wilmarth must do me full justice."

They did not talk so very much about the future. Helen read aloud to her a while, and then they took an odd leap over into next sum-

mer, when the days were bright and long and the blue sky uplifting.

"I shall try to go somewhere in the summer. Do you love the seaside, Helen?"

"Oh, I think I should. The biggest sea I know about is the Hudson River emptying in the fine, broad Bay," and they both laughed.

"Lying here on the sofa yesterday I dreamed out a plan. We will ask that other girl, Miss Craven, and go somewhere at a beautiful seaside. Then neither of you will be closely confined with a notional invalid. We will take our choicest poetry along, we will have driving on the sands, and some sailing,—I'm not a bad sailor,—and we will enjoy all the delight we can put into it. You will surely go?" looking wistfully into the shining eyes.

"I promise. Yes, and I'll promise for Juliet too," caressing the thin, white hand.

"It will soon be spring. I am tired of this winter. It has been a little of almost everything, and nothing long. I don't know how I could have stood it if I had not had your sunniness to shine on me."

"I am glad if I shine on anybody," she said with heartfelt earnestness.

It was almost dark when she ran off home.

"Your uncle wanted to see you so much," Mrs. Dayton told her. "He said they had such a grand, good time with you on Sunday, and all your Greek and Latin hadn't made you forget how to wash dishes. And Mrs. Northrup is going to call her baby Helen Jane. Of course her mother would feel hurt if it wasn't named after her. There's always been a Jane Cummings back to the first of the century, I guess. It makes confusion to have so many of the name, so they'll call it Helen, and your uncle is just as delighted as he can be. He hopes it will grow up as smart and as good as you. He is going to put fifty dollars in the bank for it, just for the name."

Helen hid her face on the friendly shoulder and cried a little; she was full to overflowing. Then she laughed too, but her voice was tremulous as she said:

"It has been a strange, happy day. This is ever so sweet of Jenny. Mrs. Wilmarth has been planning to go to some pretty seaside place this summer, and take me and Juliet Craven. But this is the most wonderful of all, and I can hardly believe it. A very touching letter of condolence and appreciation came

from London with the announcement that there was five hundred pounds of back salary subject to the executor's orders. Think of it!" and her eyes were in a glow. "It has been a golden day. Everybody has rejoiced with me."

"And I add my congratulations. I hoped there would be something. For though your father never was set up about anything, his clothes were of a nice kind, and he never acted as if there were pinches anywhere. Oh, Helen, you deserve it all, and would if it was twice as much," and she kissed her tenderly.

Mr. Parker, one of the school commissioners, spent the evening with Mr. Warfield. Sunday the matter was not mentioned, but while Helen was at Mr. Walters' the next day Mrs. Dayton announced the girl's happy surprise.

Of course they congratulated her at the dinner table, Mr. Conway with much enthusiasm, Mr. Warfield rather stiffly. Helen wondered a little. Something had changed him of late. He had not liked her going to Mr. Walters, but she had been studying as well as working.

He felt crowded out. So many new inter-

ests annoyed him. She never came to him for counsel, and he felt that he did truly have her welfare at heart.

Then she ran off upstairs and started a fire in her father's room. There was a long letter from Juliet. Daisy Bell treated her in the very coolest fashion, but she had found some new interests. She was trying to comfort two desolate little girls who had been unexpectedly sent to school and were very lonely. Mrs. Aldred had announced that she would be home by the 1st of June to see her dear girls and bid them Godspeed at Commencement. And she said: "Will some one tell me how it has fared with Helen Grant? I must see if she cannot come for a few days."

There was a very sweet letter from Mrs. Bell, with this query at the end: "What has happened between you and Daisy?"

She seized her pen and wrote on the impulse of the moment, softening as much as she could. What made written words so much more emphatic when they stared at you in black and white? No, she could not send it. If she could only see the dear, motherly friend and talk out the sorrow of her heart. She wanted so to be friends again.

The next day they reached the last of the book, though Mr. Walters had not hurried, his young amanuensis had been such a delight to him.

"I wonder if I might keep these papers of your father's?" he inquired. "It seems as if I must have known him a good many years. I have a feeling that you can grow into fellowship with the dead. They will come back to you when I am gone."

She was so glad that a sudden joy lighted her face. She experienced a strange pity for her father's lonely life. In the other country she hoped he would know.

"I shall be glad to give them in your charge, with some others and several books. And oh, I am so happy in the thought of your regard for him."

"He was worthy of it, child. It will be necessary for you to sign a relinquishment of what he desired to become the property of the Museum. It will be a year before all the matters are adjusted. Meanwhile—if you need any money——"

"Oh, how thoughtful you are!" glancing up with grateful eyes. "That will take me through college, and I could hardly enter the

coming fall. There is one thing, though——" wistfully.

"Well, anything I can do," beaming kindly

over his spectacles.

"I want a monument of some kind over father's grave. Not too ornate for the burying-ground. I would like his degrees on it. And mother's name as well. The little old stone could be taken up. I do not think Uncle Jason would know just how to go about it."

"I shall be glad to." What a sweet, dutiful daughter she was. Had his friend quite appreciated her? "I have had a talk with Mr. Wilmarth, and if anything should happen to me he will take charge of whatever business is left. And, though there is not much money," smiling with amusement, "you will need a guardian, being under age."

"A guardian! Oh, that is funny!" and

she laughed.

"So everything had better be in his hands. But I want you to come to me and trust me like a second father."

"And I shall be glad to," her eyes shining with emotion. The sympathy lacking in her father she had found here.

Helen walked slowly homeward, full of

chaotic desires. The sky was overcast, making a sort of twilight. Some one touched her arm, and she turned.

"Oh, Mr. Warfield!"

- "Is the brown study back of the eighteen centuries?" he asked rather ironically. "Are you never going to be done with those old Jews?"
- "We are done—at least I am," in a quiet tone.
- "And it is just that much good time thrown away."
- "Oh, no, I think not. The publishers have expressed themselves as much pleased with it and are preparing illustrations. I never knew the Maccabean period was so stirring," in a tone of enthusiasm.
- "Turn down Prospect Street, here, Helen, I want to talk to you. I seem shut out of your confidence nowadays. May I inquire if you have any plans for the future?"

The tone did not invite confidence and annoyed her.

- "I have not really settled upon anything yet," she replied gravely.
- "Then hear my plans, which are worth considering, I think. I want you to enter the

High School. You ought to have done it in January. You can take an advanced standing, and I will keep coaching you at home. I am sure you can graduate next year. Then, if you should decide to go to college—"

"I have decided that question. I shall go."
He was fretted at her tone of certainty. Of
course there was the money, she could go.

"I want you to feel that I have always been your best friend. I discerned your capabilities and pushed you ahead in the old school. I took a good deal of pains with you because you were worth it. Between us all we could have had you over here in the High School, for I should have convinced your uncle, and he would have done anything for you. If that old Mrs. Van Dorn had not put her finger in the pie—"

"Don't speak that way of her!" interrupted Helen with indignation. "She gave me two beautiful, inspiriting years. She had traveled widely, she was intelligent. I owe her much, and she loved me!"

Her heart swelled with unwonted tenderness.

"So does Mrs. Dayton. She would have made sacrifices for you. Mrs. Van Dorn wanted you for a pretty, well-mannered attendant. You would never have done anything under such influences. It does seem a providence that you were snatched from them."

A sob came up in her throat, but she resolutely choked it down.

"I should let you go without any further trouble," he continued, "if you were just the ordinary girl. You have capabilities. Of course, you may like to spend your money upon non-essentials and waste a few years, but a definite purpose is so much to the true development of life. And when a teacher has taken pains with the ground-work of a scholar, and would gladly help her to the high position she could fill, it seems hard to be pushed aside as of no account."

"I am not doing that. I am very grateful to you for all your interest, for everything, and I want to keep friends—"

Her voice trembled a little. Did she really want the friendship on his terms?

"Then show me a friend's attention and regard. You have not come to me for a Greek lesson or a bit of counsel——"

"But I have read both Greek and Latin with

Mr. Walters. And we have gone over literature ancient and modern."

"With a dreamy old man whose day is past," he flung out ungraciously.

"He was a dear friend to my father. I can never forget that he was with him in those last days and did what a brother might do. He took a cordial interest in him and appreciated his attainments. I have been glad to make some return. Mr. Walters will always be a dear friend."

There was a latent indignation in her tone as well as courage, but he was too sore to appreciate it.

"I want to be just," she went on, catching her breath. "I want to be grateful for any and all assistance, even good wishes. But I have some right to my own life."

"And you dismiss me as counselor," he returned, with a bitter loftiness that was really anger.

"I do not dismiss any friend. I hope I shall never have occasion to. I want to think a little before I decide. Let us turn up this street, I am cold and tired."

He said no more. He had hoped to be her best friend, and he was jealous that Mr. Walters had gained such an ascendancy over her. He was afraid she wanted to go back to Aldred House. What charm made her win friends so readily without a seeming effort? He did not understand the willingness with which she went out of self and gave to others, demanding nothing back, yet gathering a full harvest.

She talked the matter over a few days after with Mr. Walters. She did want to go back to Aldred House.

"I shall be sorry to have you away, but I think it would be best. You are growing into a larger life, you can take the wider scope of true knowledge. You need a different atmosphere from this. If you were the ordinary girl who would teach for a few years while she was finding a husband to her liking, then I should say stay here. Not that I undervalue such lives. The sweet, commonplace women fill a useful place in the world's economy. But you will have my blessing, although I shall miss you sorely."

The tears stood in her eyes, but there were grateful smiles behind them.

The High School girls hoped she would join them if she was going to study any more. Of course, to have money left to you was a great step toward independence. They were jolly and merry and yet narrow and inconsequent. Was she growing over-critical?

Mrs. Dayton, she found, quite sided with Mr. Warfield's views.

"You have so many friends here I should think you would want to stay. As for a home, you know you are welcome enough here, and you are like a daughter of the house. I wish you really were my child, but then none of these things would have happened to you," and she gave a sort of amused laugh. "Mr. Warfield will be awfully disappointed. Perhaps you don't know that he had a serious talk with your father against taking you to London. He thought it a great sacrifice of your life. And your father was very angry with him. But if the poor old gentleman had gone blind there would have been no question. You were a good daughter, Helen. You deserve some of the best things of life. And if going away makes you happier—but of course you will always come back to me when you can."

They put their arms around each other and cried a little. Helen's heart almost misgave her.

What divine art was there to satisfy friends, to keep them from envying one another? What if Mrs. Dayton should grow jealous of Mrs. Wilmarth, but no, her heart was too large and wholesome. Aunt Jane resented her longer visits to Jenny, Daisy Bell had always been jealous of Juliet Craven, and the misunder-standing had not been set right. What was there about her so curious? Did she not give enough to each one? Was she too diffusive?

But she found so many charming qualities in people, even in some of the commonplace people. And oh, who could be better than Uncle Jason? Still an hour's talk with Mr. Walters was more instructing, more fascinating.

She wrote to Mrs. Wiley, and the answer was that they would make room for her at Aldred House, and she knew Mrs. Aldred would be glad to see her among the girls.

There was a great outcry to face. Any other girl would have felt flattered over it. Uncle Jason gave her up sweetly; he knew, like Mrs. Dayton, that she would never forget, that they would lose none of her love.

Mr. Warfield contented himself with little half sneers about Mr. Walters and the book of

his old age, as if a whole lifetime had not gone into the making of it. He accepted Helen's decision without further protest and gave her good wishes, but they had in them no heartfelt cordiality.

And so Helen Grant was to turn another leaf in her life, standing between girlhood yet fresh and sweet and bright with ambitious hopes, and the wonder what would be written on the other side of the page. But that was in wiser hands, and whatsoever was written for her to do she would accept, knowing that out of great sorrows came exquisite peace. What the future next held in store for her will be told in "Helen Grant at Aldred House."

For the day only finished the day's work. That was all demanded of it. There were all the to-morrows in which one could work.

THE END



